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SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all and an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career; and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earlier been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932 Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948 the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was organised. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950 Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953 Swamiji convened a 'World Parliament of Religions'. Swamiji is the author of over 300 volumes and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji's works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This work, a compilation from the published writings of Swami Sivananda, is in the nature of a detailed commentary on select verses of the Bhagavad Gita. While many readers may be familiar with the stanza-by-stanza commentary of the holy Master on the full Gita text, in this volume they will find a considerably more detailed exposition of the implications of Sri Krishna's instructions to Arjuna which are as valid today as they were at the time of the Mahabharata war.

The book begins with an Introduction which deals with the goal of human life and the vital role of religion and Yoga in the achievement thereof. Life without religion is a dreary waste and Yoga is but an aid in the practice of one's own religion. Yoga is universal and the Yoga Shastra of Lord Krishna, namely, the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, is equally universal. Yoga and the Gita are open to all. The Master's most lucid, free-flowing commentary on a wide spectrum of the Gita verses brings the secrets of Sri Krishna's teachings to the doorstep of every English speaking household.

The stanzas chosen cover a wide range of topics that are of immediate consequence to every spiritual seeker. The compilation starts with subjects pertaining to spiritual Sadhana in general and then proceeds to cover the more important topics under Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga in that order. The living voice of Sivananda echoes and re-echoes on every page and in every line, casting a magic spell on the reader, rousing him at the same time to heightened efforts in the direction of God and Truth.

A glossary is appended mainly for the benefit of the Western Yoga enthusiasts.

It gives us genuine pleasure to invite the reader to derive inspiration and profit from the pages that follow.

The Divine Life Society
Shivanandanagar, Rishikesh, India
March 22 1981.

PREFACE

Almighty Lord, Father of mankind, God of love and grace, I pray to Thee to bless all beings with peace and joy. May all beings be free from sorrow and affliction! May happiness and welfare prevail in their life!

Beloved reader, peace be unto you. I consider it a rare blessing and a spiritual privilege to write this *Preface* to this inspiring book, which contains the boundless love and goodwill of the great-hearted spiritual teacher, the revered Swami Sivananda of sacred memory. The holy Master, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh in India, was a well-wisher of the whole world. He was the compassionate spiritual Master of modern mankind. He was a benefactor of both the East and the West and of both hemispheres.

This book brings to you his wisdom teachings, his friendship and sympathy, his spiritual love and divine insight into your problems and difficulties. This book is the tangible fruit of his intense desire to help all humanity, to free it from sorrow and suffering and to show it the way to happiness and blessedness. This book comes to you filled with the holy benedictions of a saint, with the spiritual wisdom of a sage, with the light of his inner spiritual illumination, and with the inspiration and power of his penance and inner realisation. It is a rare treasure for you. Make it your life's companion. It can be your guide, friend and philosopher. Read a little daily. It will nourish you inwardly and benefit you physically, mentally, intellectually, morally and spiritually.

The 8th of September is a blessed day to remember and rejoice upon. For, upon this day one hundred years ago, on the 8th September, 1887, a child was born to

pious parents who belonged to highly religious families on both sides. This child was verily a boon and a blessing to mankind, for it was destined to become a cosmic friend, a benefactor of all humanity and a great spiritual teacher whose message of selflessness, devotion, spiritual meditation and God-realisation was soon to reach every part of the globe in this present 20th century. This child grew up to become firstly, a dedicated and compassionate medical doctor; then secondly, to become an illumined sage, a holy saint and spiritual Master of present-day humanity. Even as bees surround a fully blossomed flower, so too, sincere seekers, aspirants and devotees flocked to this man of God, who lived his simple life in a humble hermitage on the bank of the holy river Ganges in the region of the Himalayan mountains. This sage and Yogi was Swami Sivananda.

He spoke to them words of spiritual guidance, inspiration and instruction. To others, who were too far away to come to him, he wrote these teachings, radiant with the light and power of his illumination. To him it was a labour of love, full of dedication and joy. Thus, from his humble little cell by the sacred waters' edge, his spiritual message and teachings flowed in all directions and reached countless seekers all over the world. These teachings covered all aspects of human life. They had but one motive or intention or objective, namely, the welfare and happiness of all human beings and their highest spiritual blessedness. This friend of mankind passed into the Great Beyond on 14th July, 1963. He left behind for posterity the immense treasures of his practical wisdom, to inspire, uplift and purify the reader. This book brings to you the invaluable treasure of his teachings.

To observe the 100th year of his birth, his devout disciples, followers and students are making available to the people of the present day the treasures of his wisdom, by bringing out a series of his publications under the auspices of his holy Birth Centenary. This present volume you hold in your hands is one such in this

centenary publication series, prepared and published as a humble token of their love, reverence and boundless gratitude to this great Master of this 20th century.

Human society everywhere, in this present space age and technological era, is living in fear and anxiety of a possible (even if not probable!) nuclear annihilation. Insecurity and a feeling of uncertainty about how one must live and strive fill the heart of modern man. This situation arises through ignorance of the deeper meaning and higher purpose of existence. It is due to the neglect to acquire the elementary knowledge of the true goal of our life, of its end and means. It is due to the failure of modern mankind to give the rightful place in our life to noble ideals and higher values and principles that are indispensable for sane living and sane human relationship. Due to this serious error, human society has created for itself a situation of great danger and much fear and unhappiness. All sorts of solutions have been tried. Yet man is moving deeper into ever-increasing difficulties, because the entire problem is not merely social, economic or political. The real trouble which human society is facing is one of ethical and spiritual poverty. It is a malaise of the spirit of man. As such, the really effective solution is and can only be a spiritual and moral solution.

To help resolve this grave situation, the worshipful Master, Swami Sivananda, made it his life's mission to disseminate spiritual knowledge in order to remove the darkness of spiritual ignorance and bring light upon life's path. He strove all his life to bring about a world-wide spiritual awakening and to make man aware of the sublime goal of spiritual perfection through the manifestation of the Divinity present in every human individual. His lofty spiritual message and teachings had as their aim the presentation of the ethical ideal and spiritual goal of life by which man can liberate himself from sorrow and fear and attain peace and happiness. He did this in a compelling manner through the force of his

simple, direct way of addressing the reader through the pages of a book.

People called him variously as the *Yogi of the Himalayas, The Sage of Rishikesh, The Prophet of the New Age* and *The Acharya of the Atomic Era.* Be this as it may, he was without doubt one thing for certain-`a friend of all mankind and a benefactor of humanity of our present age. Therefore it is that his disciples and followers felt that one of the most appropriate ways of observing his Birth Centenary was to bring his message and teachings to the spiritually-minded all over the world. This would indeed constitute a most appropriate manner in which to show their reverence to the great Master and to pay homage to his sacred memory.

These Centenary volumes have been made possible through the co-operative efforts of various noble friends, and particularly through the great love and dedication of my spiritual brother, the revered Sri Swami Sahajanandaji Maharaj and devotees and adherents of the Sivananda Ashram, Durban, South Africa who have been responsible for the editing, film-setting and financing of the entire project. I pray to the Almighty Lord to shower His Divine Grace upon all those associated with this publication project of which the present volume is the result.

May the choicest blessings of worshipful Master, Swami Sivananda, be upon all and upon you too, blessed reader! Peace be unto you and to all! May the illuminating teachings of Swami Sivananda continue to help all mankind to come out from darkness into light, from bondage to freedom, from sorrow unto happiness, and from mortality unto immortality and divine beatitude!

Swami Chidananda (President)
The Divine Life Society
Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India.
8th September, 1981.

CONTENTS

Introduction

The baby mews. The child jumps, dances and plays with toys. The schoolboy walks along with his books. The grownup young man gets degrees. The adolescent twists his moustache, fights, quarrels and runs after women. He tries to get name and fame. He hoards wealth. He begets children. Then he grows old, wears spectacles and puts on a dental set. He totters with a stick. Finally, he passes away with a hiccup.

A drop of water sprinkled on a heated iron piece produces a hissing sound and is immediately vapourised. Man makes a little noise during the short period called his life and disappears in a moment.

What is man? What can he become? What is the mind? What is the most desirable state? A study of these will be really profitable.

Man is a Soul

To the Westerner, man is merely a physical creature endowed with a mind and possessing a soul. To the Hindu, he is essentially a soul expressing himself through the mind, which has the body as its counterpart to function upon the physical plane.

Man is a soul having a body. Man is essentially a spiritual being. Man lives because in essence he is the spirit or soul. His innermost essence is the Atman or the Divine Spirit. His true nature is God. The physical body and the intellect depend on the soul within, about which man knows little or nothing.

Man is not this body. He is not his senses or even his mind. These are his vehicles. The body and mind are subject to change, decay and death, whereas the real

man—the immortal Self or Atman—is ever abiding never ending, eternal, unborn, perfect and ancient.

You have a body but you are not the body. You have a mind but you are not the mind. The body and mind are your instruments like the tools of a carpenter. This body is an instrument or servant of the soul and not its prison.

Know that the body is the temple of the radiant and self-effulgent Spirit or Atman or Soul within, which controls and moves all the faculties of the mind and the body. Know that you are breathing the breath of the Spirit and not a physical breath.

Death does not end all. Death does not mean total annihilation. Death does not end the chain or sequence. The working agent, the Soul in the body, does not and cannot die with the death of the body. Man's Soul is immortal. Just as a person lays aside his overcoat, so also he lays aside the physical body at death.

The body is the slough of the Soul. The Soul is the mover of the body-chariot. When the body is destroyed, the Spirit or Soul continues living. You still have your thoughts, memory, will-power and subtle body.

It is very ludicrous to believe that there is no Soul at all beyond the body. It is true that extinction is the final stage of all "organisations", but "consciousness" is not an organisation. It is an eternal verity untouched by change and decay. Man may change his form of individuality but he cannot change the eternal awareness which is his very existence. Behind all thoughts there is a consciousness of thought and one cannot get behind this consciousness.

It is impossible that consciousness can ever come to an end. Hence there must be rebirth. Otherwise, what happens to the Jiva or individual soul after it shakes off the physical body? It must exist in a different form of consciousness suited to its further growth into greater fullness. That consciousness perishes at the time of the

death of the physical body is a childish idea. Consciousness is eternal and it persists beyond death.

In man the consciousness is veiled by mind and matter. Therefore, he is not able to realise his essential, divine nature. Unless man is liberated from the bondage of mind and matter, he cannot have knowledge of the Self or Atman.

What is Religion?

The sole object of life is the attainment of Self-realisation or absolute freedom. The aim of man's life is to unfold and manifest the Godhead which is eternally existent within him. The purpose of life is to lose all sense of the distinctive personality and get dissolved in the Lord. The attainment of Infinite Life is the supreme purpose of finite life.

Mundane life is all unreal. It is illusory and transitory. It is trifling and worthless. Its end is only dust. There is nothing but tall talk, gossip, eating and sleeping. All is illusory, all is painful. Mundane experience has no value, no reality. God alone is real.

Any number of zeroes have no value unless you add 1 before them. Similarly, even if you possess the wealth of the whole world, it is nothing if you do not lead a spiritual life, if you have no spiritual wealth, if you have no Self-realisation. You will have to live in the Soul. You will have to add the Atman to the life here. That is the reason why Lord Jesus says: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all else shall be added unto you".

Religion is life in God. Religion is relationship of the three fundamental principles—God, the world and the individual. Religion gives solace to the weary pilgrim on this earth-plane. It explains life's mystery to him. It shows the path to the immortal abode.

Religion consists in doing good to others. It consists in the practice of love, mercy, truthfulness and purity in

all walks of life. Religion is practical philosophy; philosophy is theoretical religion. Philosophy is for ever searching, enquiring, questioning. Religion is ever sensing, experiencing, realising.

Religion is not dogma. It is not a creed. Creed is only broken reed. Religion is not theology. It is not merely a belief or emotion. It is not merely a little prayer which one offers when one suffers from severe intestinal colic or chronic dysentery. It is pre-eminently a life of goodness and service. It is a life of meditation. He who is loving, kind, pious and truthful, who is endowed with faith and devotion, is truly religious.

The essence of religion is not marks on the forehead, not matted locks and long beards, not standing in the hot sun or cold water, not the orange-coloured robe, not the shaven head, not ringing of bells, not blowing of the conch, not playing of cymbals. The essence of religion is goodness, purity and service in the midst of mundane temptations.

Religion means living in God. It is not mere discussion about God. Mere intellectual assent cannot make you really religious. Real religion is beyond argument. It can only be lived, both inwardly and outwardly. It is realising and becoming.

Let not personal bias, force of convention or the opinion of fanatics and sectarians blind your vision to a narrow view of religion. Do not be prejudiced by observing the religious practices of the untutored masses. Through the power of pure reason and discrimination, you must be able to differentiate the essentials from the non-essentials in religion and philosophy. Then only can you be happy. The essentials of all religions are one and the same. They all agree. Religions differ only in the non-essentials.

A religious life is a great blessing. It lifts man from the mire of impurity and infidelity. The intellect is vain if not illumined by religion. Religion does what philosophy

cannot do. If you live according to the rules of religion, you will attain wisdom, immortality, everlasting peace and eternal bliss.

Religion frees one from all sorrow and pain. Religion bestows everlasting peace. Religion makes one perfect and free. Religion makes one independent. Religion unites the soul with Brahman. Religion frees one from the round of births and deaths.

Religion is the foundation of society, the source of all goodness and happiness, the basis of the prosperity and virtue of the individual and, through the individual, of the entire nation. Civilisation, order, unity, morality-all that elevate man and give peace to the nation-are the fruit of the practice of religion.

Take away religion, then man lives to no purpose. He stays far, far away from the purpose of his birth. Life then becomes a dreary waste here. Really, there is no life without religion. It is only religion that makes existence valuable and fills the mind with love, devotion, serenity and cheerfulness. No materialistic force can annihilate the religious urge in man though for a time a certain kind of propaganda may serve as a deterrent.

Science and Religion

Some scientists and so-called educated persons believe that science can explain everything, can solve the riddle of the universe and all problems of life. They also think that the scientific method is the only method of finding out the truth, and that scientific training and discipline alone can build very efficiently the character of man. They ignore ethical discipline, morality and religion altogether.

One scientist came to me and said, "The Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras have not been written scientifically. I am trying to give a scientific approach to this vital subject."

I laughed at his remark and answered, "My dear scientist-friend, the Upanishads are revelations. Brahma-Vidya is transcendental knowledge. The Atman also is transcendental. You cannot take your test-tubes and spirit lamps near Him. The conclusions of the scientists cannot approach His region. Their observations are one-sided as they concern the waking state only. Their experiences are only relative experiences.

The scientist kept quiet, lowered his head in shame and walked away silently.

Three blind people touched three different parts of an elephant. One touched the foot and said, "The elephant is like a pillar."

The second touched the ear and said, "The elephant is like a fan."

The third touched the belly and said, "The elephant is like a pot."

So also, a scientist explores the physical plane and speaks of atoms, energy and physical laws. He is also like a blind man. He has knowledge of one dimension alone. He has ignored the dream and deep sleep states. He has no all-comprehensive knowledge.

Science has analysed man. Man is supposed to be a creature composed of various physical and chemical substances. Yet no scientist has so far been able to assemble these constituent chemical elements of a man's body into one homogeneous creature which lives, talks and acts like a man. And no scientist is able to comprehend the mystery of creation and the Creator and the meaning of life.

Scientists are very busy in studying the external world. They have entirely forgotten to study the internal world. Science gives you knowledge only of phenomenal appearances and not of the Reality behind them. Science has not been able to solve the important questions: what

is the ultimate stuff of the world? Who am I? What is the ultimate truth?

Science tells us that the ultimate goal of everything is unknown and unknowable. But Vedanta teaches that the ultimate goal is the attainment of Brahman or the Infinite, and that It can be realised through hearing of the scriptures and through reflection and meditation.

Science has its limitations also. It does not have any instrument by which it could just collect the supersensual or spiritual data or those divine facts which exist in a subtle form and which we cannot see. The Soul is beyond the realm of physical science. It is beyond the reach of material science. It is extremely subtle. It is subtler than ether, mind and energy. Consciousness and intelligence are of the Soul and not of the body. Consciousness is evidence of the existence of the Soul. The Soul is the immortal part of man.

Science is a systematic study of facts. It tries to reduce observations or observed facts to a system. In order that a fact may be valid for science, it must be perceptible to the senses. Sensing is false knowledge. Intuition is right knowledge. Intuitive knowledge alone is the highest knowledge. It is the imperishable, infinite knowledge of Truth.

A scientist is an extrovert. He bombards the atoms. He will not find pure Consciousness there. He must withdraw the senses and rest in his own inner Self. He must dive deep into the ocean of Brahmic Consciousness.

Science is not the enemy of religion but a preparation for the latter. Science is an enemy of superstition alone. Both science and religion are engaged in the search for Truth. Their attitudes are essentially the same but the fields of application vary.

The Hindu Rishis, seers and sages have recognised the harmonious relation between science and religion.

The divorce of science from religion is the cause of confusion and conflict. Science is religion as applied to the investigation of Truth in the finite Nature outside-the object. Religion is science as applied to the realisation of the Infinite, the Truth that underlies all objects-the subject.

Science interprets on the phenomenal plane the One as energy. Religion interprets the One as the Self, the Atman. Science analyses, classifies and explains phenomena while Brahma-Vidya, the Science of the Self, teaches you to transcend phenomena and attain immortality.

The scientific and the religious approaches to Truth are really complementary and not contradictory. Religion and science are twin brothers. They should harmoniously and mutually help to search for Truth.

The mind and intellect are finite instruments. They cannot realise the infinite Reality but are the means to Its realisation. When the intellect has passed through the various stages of reasoning and when it has been completely purified, then revelation dawns. True religion begins where the intellect ends.

Let it not be thought that religion is dogmatic, otherworldly, a pet tradition of blind believers or irrational emotionalists. Religion is the most rational science, the science of life itself, the science of man as he essentially is, not merely as he presumes himself to be. The basis of all the secular sciences is Brahma-Vidya. Brahma-Vidya is the foremost among all sciences because through its means one attains immortality. One cannot learn this science of sciences in any university. One will have to learn it from a God-realised preceptor, after having controlled the senses and the mind.

Seek within. Stand not as a beggar before the door of science-power, which destroys more than it heals. Do not surrender yourself to the scientists. They are not able to explain anything. Science knows nothing about the

origin of life, the origin of thought and the origin and destiny of human nature and the universe. There are many questions to which religion alone can give the answers and not science.

The Bhagavad Gita

The teachings of India's ancient seers are indeed the most universal. The works of Yoga belong to the entire world. They are also practical to the core. Numerous persons are turning from a war-torn and sullied atmosphere to India and her ancient, divine wisdom which is found in the *Gita,* the *Upanishads* and the Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

Mahatma Gandhi once visited one of the largest libraries in London and asked the librarian what spiritual book was borrowed by readers most frequently. The librarian said that it was the Gita.

The greatest gift, the greatest blessing that India has conferred upon the world, upon all humanity, is this sublime yet eminently practical, universal gospel of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita.* The greatest thinkers and philosophers of the Occident have vied with one another in paying their devout tribute at the shrine of the Gita. Wilhelm von Humboldt, the famous Occidental scholar, states: *"The Bhagavad Gita* is the deepest and most sublime production the world possesses". Emerson, the great sage of America, had a copy of the Gita always on his table.

In the midst of the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna, during the course of His most interesting and instructive talk with Arjuna, revealed the profound, sublime and soul-stirring spiritual truths and expounded to Arjuna the rare secrets of Yoga, Vedanta, Bhakti and Karma. All the teachings of Lord Krishna were subsequently recorded by Bhagavan Vyasa as the *Song Celestial* or the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita,* for the benefit of humanity at large. The world is under a great debt of gratitude to Sri Vyasa who presented this celestial

song to humanity for its daily conduct of life, spiritual uplift and Self-realisation. Only those who are self-controlled and who are endowed with faith can reap the full benefits of the Gita which is the science of the Soul.

Sri Krishna gave His Gita not merely to Arjuna, but through Arjuna, to the whole world at large. The problems that faced Arjuna face mankind in general. The Gita is the answer to the universal question of life as a whole.

To live means to fight, for all life is a battle wherein the forces of good and evil, the divine and the demoniacal, purity and passion, are ceaselessly at war. The battle of Mahabharata is still raging deep within us. Ignorance is Dhritarashtra. The individual soul is Arjuna. The indweller of our heart is Lord Krishna, the charioteer. The body is the chariot. The senses are the horses. Mind, egoism, lust, impressions, cravings, attraction and repulsion, desires, jealousy, greed, pride and hypocrisy are our dire enemies.

The *Gita* symbolises the solution of this eternal struggle between the spiritual and the material in every human being. It does not exclude any being from receiving its message and becoming blessed. It is entirely non-sectarian and is pre-eminently a practical gospel. It embodies in itself a solution more than just an exposition or a revelation. It embodies in itself a solution to the immediately pressing problems of man and carries a wonderful message of hope, encouragement, cheer and consolation. It is a direct appeal to divinise the entire nature of man. It has an inspiring, workable message for you, for me and for every man and woman living his or her ordinary life in the busy, everyday world.

The Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita* is an exact science. It is a perfect, practical system of self-culture. It is the science of right living. It has nothing to do with religious belief, colour, traditional faith, vocation or clime. Yoga is

neither Eastern nor Western; it is of the world, of humanity in general. Krishna is not merely a Hindu God; He is the representative of the inner Reality, which exists in all without difference.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is not merely an Aryan scripture, but also a gospel of divine life. It is the scripture of the Yogi, and a Yogi one can be in every walk of life, at every step and stage. Even one who aspires for Yoga is beyond the ordinary rules of human conduct and religious practice. To become wider and deeper and more inclusive in one's being and consciousness is the aim of Yoga; and this is the goal of human life.

Yoga is Universal

The idea of the novice that Yoga constitutes only physical exercises or mere Asanas and Pranayama is a terrible error. Yoga Asanas, Pranayama, Bandhas, Mudras and Kriyas have nothing to do with real Yoga. They are aids in Yoga practice.

Most people do not have access to Yoga beyond its physical level, because true Yoga needs intense personal discipline, coupled with deep reflection under the guidance of an able teacher. Yoga promises superphysical and spiritual blessings. It becomes unattractive to a common man who clamours for immediate fruit and worldly prosperity.

Yoga is for all. It is not a sectarian affair. It is a way to God and not a creed. The practice of Yoga is not opposed to any religion or any sacred church. It is a purely spiritual and universal science. It does not contradict anyone's sincere faith.

Yoga is not a religion but an aid to the practice of the basic spiritual truths in all religions. Yoga can be practised by a Christian or a Buddhist, a Parsee, a Mohammedan, a Sufi or an atheist. To be a Yogi means to abide continuously in God, and to live at peace with

others. Yoga is union with God. Yoga is union with all. God dwells in all.

Moral purity and spiritual aspiration are the first steps on the path of Yoga. One who has a calm mind, who has faith in the words of his Guru and the scriptures, who is moderate in eating and in sleeping, and who has intense longing for deliverance from the wheel of this worldly existence, is a qualified person for the practice of Yoga.

An aspirant on the path of Yoga should have faith, energy, cheerfulness, courage, patience, perseverance, sincerity, purity, absence of despondency, dispassion, concentration, aspiration, serenity, self-restraint, truthfulness, non-violence and non-covetousness. An austere and simple life is indispensable for the practice of Yoga. The foundation of Yoga is self-control. Discipline is the essence of Yoga, the discipline of the body as well as of the mind.

Sri Krishna's Teachings in the Gita

The Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita* is an art. You should be ever active and at the same time feel inwardly that you are the non-doer and non-enjoyer. You should take a deep interest in everything. And yet you should be perfectly unattached.

Sri Krishna asks man to consider himself a doll in the hands of God. He asks man to think of himself as a soldier, with God as his general and his worldly acts as duties under orders. He asks man to act in the faith and belief that whatever he does is the work of God. He asks man to act, but to act only with devotion to Him and without desire for fruit.

The teachings given by Lord Krishna are simply wonderful. He gives instructions on a variety of subjects, but the one ringing note is: "See Me in everything. Surrender yourself to Me. Do all actions for My sake. Cut

off all sorts of attachments. Have perfect, unswerving devotion to Me. Sing My glories".

The Lord gives you practical, wholesome guidance. Like a lotus leaf in water you should remain at work. Feel that the Lord's supreme power does everything here. We are all His instruments. Let your hands be ever engaged in the service of the Lord in all. Let your mind be ever thinking of His glories. Let your intellect discriminate correctly. And let your soul be ever in union with the Lord. This is Yoga. A Yogi is not an idle dreamer, an inert stone. Building castles in the air is not the Yoga that Lord Krishna asks us to practise. Beloved aspirants, give up delusion. Plunge in service.

Yoga is not hidden in caves. It is not in thick, sequestered forests. It is not to be found in mountain herbs. God is not a coward to run away from towns, cities and villages. He is all-pervading.

The *Gita* does not want you to flee from your worldly career to the solitude of the forest. It does not bid you hide in a cave of the Himalayas for attaining the supreme peace of the Eternal. It tells you to resist unrighteousness, to develop divine virtues and try to attain Self-realisation in and through the world.

Stick to your duty and to truthfulness. Do selfless service. Surrender yourself to the Lord. Have equal vision and a balanced mind in success and failure, in heat and cold, in honour and dishonour, in pleasure and pain, in happiness and sorrow. Give the mind to the Lord and hands to the service of humanity. Be firmly established in the vow of Brahmacharya. Give up selfishness, meanness, attachment and egoism. You will then be free from the wheel of births and deaths, from the bonds of Karma. You will attain supreme peace, eternal bliss and immortality. This is the message of the *Gita*.

O man! you have been corrupted by wrong education. God can be neither examined in a glass tube in a laboratory nor cut open by a surgeon's knife. No one

can prove God by means of logic. You cannot meet God without devotion.

You are proud because of your boasted intellect and try to prove that God does not exist. You take pride that you are Godless. What a vain, Godless man you are! You live in vain. You have wasted your life. Open your eyes now. Wake up from your long slumber of ignorance. Take refuge in Gita's Lord, Sri Krishna. Still there is hope for you. He is all-merciful. He is ready to bless you. Study the *Gita* daily and live in the spirit of this divine scripture. You will soon attain eternal bliss and immortality.

Worship the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* as a holy scripture. Study a chapter of it daily. Concentrate upon some of the verses or themes of the book. But do not stop at that. Live in the spirit of its teachings. Mere talk and lecturing will not help you in any way. You may know the whole of the Gita by heart; you may deliver lectures on it for hours together; and yet you may not have a ray of the wisdom that the Gita propounds.

What is wanted is regular practice of the teachings of the *Gita*. Become intensely practical. Let this holy scripture guide your thoughts, prompt your speech and rule your actions. Then your whole attitude towards life will gradually change. You will become a God-man with God-vision. You will no more be affected by success or failure, pleasure or pain, loss or gain. You will attain courage, strength, peace and bliss in this very life, right where you are.

Glory! Glory to the *Gita!* Glory to Lord Krishna who has given it to the men of this world for attaining liberation! May His blessings be upon you all! May the *Gita* be your centre, ideal and goal! Blessed is he who studies the *Gita* daily! Twice blessed is he who lives in the spirit of the *Gita!* Thrice blessed is he who has attained Atma-Jnana or knowledge of the *Gita!*

—Sri Swami Sivananda

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—Sri Swami Sivananda

KINGLY SCIENCE
KINGLY SECRET

1

The Royal Science of Brahma-Vidya

Kingly science, kingly secret, the supreme purifier is this, realisable by direct intuitional knowledge, according to righteousness, very easy to perform, imperishable.

(IX-2)

Brahma-Vidya is the Science of sciences. The knower of Brahma-Vidya or the Science of Brahman or the Science of the Absolute, knows everything. His knowledge is full. He has the whole experience through intuition or revelation. Take your firm seat on the rock-bottom of the Upanishadic truths and accept the findings of science only if they tally with the Upanishadic truths, otherwise reject them ruthlessly.

All secular sciences have their own limitations. A scientist works on the physical plane with a finite mind and with instruments. He knows the physical laws. He has some knowledge of the elements, atoms and physical energy. His knowledge is fragmentary. He has no experience of the whole. He has no knowledge of transcendental or supersensual things.

Science is only a partially unified knowledge. A scientist infers, investigates and draws exact conclusions from his observations. He understands Nature but he knows nothing of the origin or destiny of Nature.

Who made the sun and gave power to its rays? Who combined four parts of nitrogen with one part of oxygen? Who gave power to the electrons? Who gave power to the atoms to combine into molecules? Who or what made and bestowed upon the ultimate particles of matter their marvellous power of varied interaction? Science does not know this great mystery. On the contrary, Yoga is

completely unified knowledge. A Yogi gets inner, divine realisation. He clearly sees with his inner Yogic eye the subtle rudiments of matter. He identifies himself with the Supreme Being who is the Lord of Prakriti or matter. He gets control over the five elements. He clearly understands the whole mystery of creation through direct intuitional knowledge. The scientist lacks this sort of knowledge. He has only experimental knowledge.

In the matter of evidence in psychological questions, the sense-perceptions with which science naturally deals are only second-rate criteria and are therefore to be received with caution. The closing of the external channels of sensation is usually the signal for the opening of the psychic and, from all evidence, it would seem that the psychic sense is more extensive, acute and in every way more dependable than the physical.

The business of science is generalisation of phenomena; it is the function of philosophy and Yoga to explain. Religion is the practical aspect of philosophy. Philosophy is the rational aspect of religion. The scientist tries to answer the "how" of the problem; the philosopher and the Yogi attempt to answer the "why" of it. It is a mistake to say that such and such an event occurs because of certain laws of Nature. The laws of Nature do not give any real explanation of the phenomena. A law of Nature is simply a statement, in terms as general as possible, of what happens under given circumstances in a natural phenomenon. Science is only concerned with the phenomena. Science shows a marvellous harmony of Nature. But it is the problem of philosophy and Yoga to solve the "why" of Nature's harmony.

Scientists possess a partial knowledge of the universe. They have not understood the whole code of Nature's laws. They have no knowledge of the occult side of things. They have no knowledge of the astral, mental and higher planes such as Brahma-Loka or the world of Brahma. The unseen world is of far greater importance than the sense-universe which is visible to the naked

eye. A fully developed Yogi can function on all planes and so he has full knowledge of the manifested and the unmanifested Nature. The senses, by which you get a knowledge of the external objects, are not fully developed. Therefore, the knowledge obtained is partial. The external senses are exact counterparts of the internal astral senses. Scientists have no knowledge of the subtle rudiments of matter. Life will become fuller and richer when one develops this inner eyesight by the practice of Yoga. Just as blood, when seen under the microscope, reveals many mysterious things, such as leucocytes, nuclei, pigment, germs and bacilli, so also the inner Yogic eye reveals many a mystery to the hidden side of things. The knowledge of the scientists is only fragmentary or partial, whereas the knowledge of the Yogis who have realised the Truth is full and perfect.

In its outlook, science differs radically from philosophical musings. Consequently, the mode of approach of science to its specific problems is different from that of philosophy. Yet there is some similarity in the findings of both science and philosophy when some broad questions are discussed.

Scientists have to learn many things from the seers of the East. Who gave power to the electrons to revolve? What is at the bottom of these electrons? Who gave life to the cell or the protoplasm? Who gave intelligence to the cells to secrete milk or bile or gastric juice from the blood? The scientists are still observing and experimenting. They are still groping in darkness. What is the cause of the origin of an impulse? Who is the director of the mind? What is the cause of the origin of thought? Even if all the living scientists were to put their heads together to solve these questions, they cannot give definite and conclusive answers.

The mind of a scientist cannot work on higher spiritual planes. It is gross and impure. It has outgoing tendencies. It is filled with desires, passions and worldly impressions. The scientist cannot look within, introspect

and meditate. He can analyse the atoms of different elements but he cannot do self-analysis. He can bombard the atoms, watch the movements of the electrons and make discoveries in Nature. But the mind of a Rishi or a Yogi is subtle and pure. It is free from worldly desires and passions, from selfishness, lust and hatred. It is equipped with the instructions of the sages and the Srutis. It is filled with purity. It is free from outgoing tendencies. It is fit for divine contemplation. It is properly disciplined in a variety of ways through rigorous austerity and self-restraint. The Yogi undergoes a discipline, a rare discipline-through the practice of tranquillity of mind, control of the senses, restraints, internal and external purification, etc.-which cannot be had in the universities.

The scientist observes the physical phenomena, makes experiments and goes from the effects to the cause. The Rishi or the Yogi goes directly to the cause or the source. He dives deep into the source and brings forth the pearl of knowledge of the Self. The man of science sees and observes things only as they appear to be to his sense-perception. The seer perceives them as they actually are in their very essential nature. He has direct intuition and perception of the Truth through Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Then he comes to the effect—the manifested universe. Therefore, his utterances are infallible. They are gospel truths. The *Srutis* of the *Upanishads* are direct revelations. They are the infallible utterances of the seers or sages. They are beyond questioning, beyond the least shadow of doubt.

When the Yogi attains the knowledge of the Eternal, he acquires the knowledge of all secular sciences as well, because all sciences hang upon Brahma-Vidya. If you have knowledge of clay or thread or gold, you will have knowledge of all the modifications of clay or thread or gold.

Scientists are also Advaitins or non-dualists. They say: "There is only one substance in this world. That is

electron. The whole world is a mass of energy." Energy is the God of the scientists. Energy is the God of the Shaktas also. Scientists have explored the physical world. They have found out numerous methods to control the physical forces of Nature. Psychologists are experimenting on the mental plane. They are trying to control the mental forces. Psychology is a branch of Raja Yoga which deals with the control of the mind. A close study of the observations and revelations of science brings a man closer to God. Who has framed the laws of Nature? Nature is blind. What is that intelligence which moves Nature? Who is the *primum mobile*? A study of the physical forces and the physical laws, and an understanding of the mental forces and the mental laws, are not sufficient to make us perfect. We should have a thorough knowledge and realisation of the substratum that lies hidden behind these names and forms and all physical and mental phenomena. Then only will we become perfect masters or full-blown adepts or Arhats or Buddhas.

Can scientific inventions make us really happy? That is the question of questions now. What has science done to us? No doubt it has added a fund of knowledge on the physical plane. But this knowledge is mere husk when compared to the knowledge of the Self-Brahma-Vidya. All sciences are founded on the knowledge of Atman.

Those who have fallen into the clutches of science dislike Sandhya and prayer. They neglect the study of the Gita, Japa, Kirtan and meditation. Even if there is a study class, a discourse on the *Upanishads,* common prayer and meditation in an adjacent hall, they will continue their smoking, drinking and card-playing or other game in the next room. They will be busy with their raffle tickets, ranger tickets and worthless talk and gossip. What an unfortunate and deplorable state!

English-educated people are carried away unduly by scientific theories and discoveries. Anything, however

stupid it may be, when stamped by the seal of science, is regarded as gospel truth. A theory or doctrine, however fallacious it may be, is accepted as true wisdom for all ages when it is proclaimed in the name of and on the authority of science. Even if some fantastic and ludicrous statements are made with the stamp of science by a Haekel, an Einstein or a Tyndel, people are quite ready to swallow them with great avidity. Such is the fashion of the day! They reject as base superstition the sublime teachings of the ancient Rishis and sages. The brains of these so-called educated and cultured people. need a prompt, drastic and thorough flushing for a protracted length of time. The poison has percolated into their very cells and tissues.

I do not mean to condemn the wonderful discoveries and inventions that modern science has contributed to the vast store of knowledge and happiness which the present generation enjoys. The radio, the aeroplane, the microphone and other marvels of science are bound to baffle human intelligence. Scientists have found ways to fertilise an ovum with chemicals, without the aid of semen. It is a stupendous success. Some children are also born. They inject the semen that is obtained from renowned and cultured men of the world in order to improve the race. They are attempting to fix a radio in a match-stick. They are trying to get the necessary nutrition into the body by pressing an electric button so that eating and defecation may be entirely abandoned. They are endeavouring to make the streets move so that there will be no necessity of motor cars and carriages. They are trying to establish a means of communication with the planet Mars. They may succeed in all their attempts. May God bless them with roaring success in all their undertakings! But the question is: can all these comforts and scientific discoveries and inventions give immortality, eternal satisfaction and everlasting peace? Have these material comforts enhanced human happiness? Is not man more restless today than ever

before? Is he not more dissatisfied and discontented despite all these comforts? Life has become more complex and intricate. Luxuries are increasing day by day. Even a rich man finds it difficult to make both ends meet.

There is only one remedy for all these ills. You will have to abandon all luxuries and go back to simple, natural living if you want to enjoy real and lasting happiness. Immortality can be attained only by realising the Self through simple living, practice of Yoga, self-control, mental discipline and meditation.

Why do you read many books? It is of no use. The great book is within your heart. Open the pages of this inexhaustible book, the source of all knowledge. You will know everything. What is this knowledge by knowing which you will know everything? This is the knowledge of Brahman or the ultimate Reality. This is Para-Vidya. This is Brahma-Vidya. This is the science of sciences. Close your eyes now. Withdraw your senses. Still the mind. Silence the bubbling thoughts. Make the mind waveless. Merge deep into the Atman, the Self, the Supreme Soul, the Light of lights, the Sun of suns. All knowledge will be revealed to you. You will have divine wisdom. All doubts will vanish. All mental torments will disappear. All hot discussions and heated debates will terminate. Peace, bliss, eternal happiness and knowledge alone will remain.

Brahma-Vidya or the Science of the Self is not a subject that can be understood and realised by mere intellectual study, reasoning or ratiocination, or even by discussions and arguments. Mere scholarly erudition and vast study with a high degree of intelligence alone cannot help one in the practical realisation of the Truth inculcated in this science. It demands perfect discipline, a discipline that is not to be found in our modern universities and colleges. It demands solid Sadhana for the achievement of the goal that is indicated by this Para-Vidya or highest science.

One has to reach a realm where there is neither light nor darkness, neither east nor west, neither gain nor loss-a realm which can never be reached either by the mind or the senses. It is not, my dear brothers, an imaginary region of the *Arabian Nights* or the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. No, certainly not. It is not an illusory or chimerical place of one's mythological fabrication. It is the one and the only real, everlasting abode of perennial peace and deep, abiding joy, wherein this fluctuating, restless mind can find a permanent rest. Sages like Sankara, Dattatreya, Mansoor, Madalasa, Gargi, Chudala, Jesus and others reached this destination after strenuous struggle and exertion.

The possibility of reaching the same level is within the reach of all who are ready to struggle hard with patience, perseverance, iron determination and strong will. What one has achieved can be attained by another. This is the grand law of Nature. Prakriti is quite unbiased. A man under normal conditions has to take countless births before he attains perfection or knowledge of the Self. If a man is sincere in his spiritual Sadhana, he can evolve quickly; he can hasten his spiritual progress in a few births which otherwise would take thousands of years. He can cut short the cycle of births and deaths by means of drastic Sadhana, great self-control and determined effort. He can have Self-realisation within the twinkling of an eye in one birth if he is a first-class aspirant with extremely good spiritual impressions.

Stand up, O Prem! Follow me. Enjoy the bliss of Atman. The river of Atmic joy is flowing all round. There is a deluge of the bliss of the Self. Drink this nectar to your heart's content. Care not for the world. Go thy own way. Let others hoard wealth and become mill-owners and multi-millionaires. They are misers only. Let others become barristers, high court judges and ministers. They are still ignorant men. Mind not a bit. The wealth of the three worlds is nothing, mere straws, before the spiritual

wealth, the wealth of Atma-Jnana. The joy of the three worlds is a mere drop when compared to the ocean of bliss of the Self. The knowledge of all secular sciences is mere husk when compared to the knowledge of the Self. Here are the priceless treasures of Atman for thee. Here is the inexhaustible wealth of Brahma-Jnana. Enjoy these riches. No dacoit or robber can rob thee of this imperishable wealth of divine knowledge. There is no insolvency, no failure of the bank, no bankruptcy here. Take possession of this great spiritual treasure, the splendour of Brahman, and enjoy it for ever and ever. Thou art now a real King of kings, Shah of shahs, Emperor of emperors. The gods, Indra and Brahma, will be jealous of thee now, O Prem! Go and distribute this imperishable wealth of knowledge of the Self far and wide.

Glory unto thee! Peace be with thee for ever and ever!

2

Faith is the First Step

The man who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued the senses obtains this knowledge: and, having obtained this knowledge, he goes at once to the supreme peace.

(IV-39)

Shraddha is faith. Faith is the greatest thing in the world. Even the highest rationality has faith as its background. One cannot ratiocinate on things in which one has no faith. Even the greatest philosopher has faith as his stronghold. No intellectualism can prove good if it is not supported by faith. The whole world stands on faith and is guided by it. Religion has faith as its root. One cannot prove God if one has no faith in God. God is only a matter of faith. This faith is the outcome of previous spiritual impressions. Certain men are born philosophers and certain others do not grasp the fundamentals of religion even at the age of seventy. This is all due to the past spiritual impressions. Faith is guided by the impressions of actions done in the previous births and the present faith is nearer or farther away from the Truth in accordance with the advance made in spiritual evolution.

Blind faith should be turned into rational faith. Faith without understanding is only blind faith. Devotion is the development of faith. Knowledge is the development of devotion. Faith leads to the final spiritual experience. Whatever a person strongly believes in, that he experiences and that he becomes. The whole world is a product of faithful imagination. If you have no faith in the world, the world does not exist. If you have no faith in sensual objects, they will not give you pleasure. If you

have no faith in God, you will never reach perfection. Wrong faith turns even existence into nonexistence.

"One who thinks that Brahman does not exist, himself becomes non-existent, states the *Taittiriya Upanishad.* Faith is the fundamental necessity for spiritual Sadhana.

Faith in God is the first step to God-realisation. Not an iota of progress is ever possible on the path of spirituality without faith. The faith must be a living faith. It must be unwavering faith. Lack of faith is a stumbling block on the path of realisation.

Faith is an important qualification for an aspirant on the path of spirituality. Students of all Yogas, whether of Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga or Jnana Yoga, should possess this fundamental virtue. No faith, no devotion. No faith, no Jnana. The Sanskrit equivalent of faith is "Shraddha" or "Visvas". The student should have faith in the existence of God, in the teachings of his Guru, in the Vedas and in his own self. The whole world runs on faith only. The Raja has faith in his Dewan. The husband has faith in his wife. The shopkeeper has faith in his customers. The patient has faith in his doctor. The client has faith in his lawyer. The engineer has faith in his head clerk.

Man lives by faith. When faith is directed to God, it becomes the cause of the liberation of the individual.

Faith is one of the important items in the Shad-Sampat or sixfold virtue of the "four means of salvation" or Sadhana Chatushtaya on the path of Jnana. Even Patanjali Maharshi, the exponent of the Raja Yoga philosophy, lays much stress on faith.

Patanjali says, "*Shraddha veerya smriti samadhi prajnapurvakaitaresham*—To others this Samadhi comes through faith, energy, memory, concentration and discrimination of the Real". He has placed faith at the very beginning of this verse. He has given prominence to it. If a man has faith, then energy and memory come by

themselves. He will collect all his energies and remember the ultimate essence and exert to realise the basic Reality.

The *Srutis* emphatically declare: "*Shraddha bhakti dhyana yogadvai hi*-Know Him by faith, devotion and meditation". Faith comes first. Without faith you cannot practise either concentration or meditation.

Self-realisation is a transcendental experience. You can march on the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth and have attained knowledge of the Self.

Kannappa, the hunter of Kalahasti, had true, living faith in Lord Shiva. He gave as his daily offering the flesh of the wild beasts to the Lord. Shiva tested the sincerity of Kannappa one day. Tears fell from His right eye in the Shiva-Linga. Kannappa was sorely moved. He plucked out his right eye and fixed it in the right eye of the Shiva-Linga. The next day there were tears in the Linga's left eye. Kannappa plucked out his left eye and fixed it in the Linga. At once Lord Shiva appeared before him and blessed him. Kannappa had new eyes immediately and attained the kingdom of Lord Shiva-Kailasa-the abode of immortality and eternal bliss. You should possess the same unshakable living faith which Kannappa had. Then only can you enjoy the everlasting peace of the Eternal.

Prahlada was persecuted by his father in a variety of ways. He was rolled down from the summit of a mountain. He was made to be trampled under the feet of an elephant. He was thrown into the sea. He was put into a large vessel which contained boiling oil. Cobras were thrown at him. Poison was administered to him by his own mother. And yet Prahlada did not lose his faith in Lord Narayana. He was clinging to Lord Hari tenaciously like a leech. His faith was unflinching and unshakable. Such must be the faith of aspirants of the Lord. You will be tested by the Lord in various ways. Even under

extreme trials and difficulties you should not lose your faith. Faith is your sheet-anchor.

It was their unswerving faith that made the two boy-devotees-Prahlada and Dhruva-immortal. The achievements of Viswamitra Rishi in his austerities and Yoga, the success of Napoleon in the field of battle, the attainments of Mahatma Gandhi in his Karma Yoga and practice of self-restraint, the awe-inspiring majesty and the soul-stirring magnanimity, grandeur and nobility of great personages like Tulasidas, Ramdas, Sankara, Dattatreya, Vamadeva and Jada Bharata were all due to the work of that simple secret called faith.

Faith is a rare flower of inestimable value. It must be cultivated in the garden of your heart. It must be nourished daily with the water of sincerity. The weeds of doubts and misgivings should be totally eradicated. Then faith will strike deep root, blossom and bear the fruit of devotion quickly.

You cannot achieve anything grand, meritorious and sublime with a weak and wavering faith. You cannot reach the goal of life with a faith that flickers at every step. You cannot ascend the summit of Nirvikalpa Samadhi with an impotent and passive faith. Your faith must be as firm as the Himalayas or the Sumeru mountains. It must be as steady as the lamp that burns in a windless place.

Faith can be strengthened through Satsanga, prayer, self-purification, meditation and study of scriptures. You can ascend the rungs of the spiritual ladder with- the help of intense, unflinching faith alone. Whenever doubts assail you, reject them ruthlessly. Open your heart to the Divine Light, the source of all knowledge, all light. Become as simple as a child. Pray from the bottom of your heart. The flame will again become brighter and brighter.

Reason is impotent. Faith is omnipotent. A devotee with faith can enter the innermost chambers of the Lord as Sudama did.

Do you not take for granted many things in geometry? The teacher says, "A line has length but no breadth. A point has position or space but no magnitude." Is this really correct? Do you argue these points in any way? You simply take them for granted. Is this not blind faith? Then again, how do you know that this man is your father? Your mother only knows your real father. She points out, "He is your father." You accept it. Is this not blind faith?

Though you are not able to see the sun on account of the clouds, the sun exists. Though you are not able to see the mind that is hidden in the brain, the electricity in the wires, the child in the womb, the butter in the milk, the fire in the wood, yet the mind, electricity, child, butter and fire do exist. Even so, though you are not able to see God who lies concealed in these forms, on account of the impurities in the mind, God does exist.

Although we cannot see the stars during the day, we know that there are stars. Even so, though we cannot see God with these physical eyes, we can infer that He is hidden behind these names and forms.

Brahman or the Self or the immanent God cannot be demonstrated as He is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind. But His existence can be inferred by certain empirical facts or common experiences in daily life.

A lady once had a fall from the third storey of a building. On the ground there was a bed of sharp angular stones. She would have received serious injuries but was miraculously saved. She herself expressed, "I felt a warm embrace by some invisible hands. Some mysterious power saved me." Instances like these are not uncommon.

An advocate had no faith in God. He developed double pneumonia. His last breath stopped. His wife, son and relatives began to weep. But he had a very mysterious experience. The messengers of the God of Death caught hold of him and took him to their court. The God of Death said to his messengers, "This is not the man I wanted. You have brought the wrong person. Send him off." The man began to breathe after one hour. He actually experienced that he had left the body, gone to the court of the God of Death and again re-entered the physical body. This astonishing experience changed his entire nature. He developed intense faith in God and became a spiritual man. He is still living in the United Provinces.

Another advocate had a similar experience but there was a little difference. He also was an atheist. He was taken to the court of the God of Death. This advocate said, "I have not finished my work on the physical plane. I have still some more useful work to do. Kindly spare my life now." His boon was granted. He was struck with wonder by this strange experience. His nature also was completely changed. He left the legal profession at once. He is now devoting the remaining portion of his life to selfless service and meditation. He is still living in South India.

Damaset, the father of Namdev, used to visit the temple of Vittoba at Pandharpur every day and worship Him with fruit and rice. He went to a neighbouring village one day on some urgent business. Gonabai, the mother of Namdev, gave the fruit and rice to Namdev and asked him to go and offer them to Vittoba. Namdev took the articles of worship and placed them before the image of Vittal or Lord Krishna and requested the Lord to eat the same. When he found that the image was silent, he wept bitterly in acute agony. Then Vittal appeared in human form and actually ate the offering in order to please His child-devotee. Faith and devotion can work wonders. The Lord becomes a slave of His devotees.

Feel the help from the invisible hands of God during worldly activities. The Lord is always with you. He is watching all your activities and thoughts. Children sometimes fall from the upper storeys of buildings and are miraculously saved. In motor car accidents and various other catastrophies, people are saved in a mysterious manner through timely help from the invisible hands of the hidden power of God. Every one of you might have had this kind of experience. When you are in great difficulty, He sends you money in a very mysterious manner from some unexpected source. You feel His Presence and His invisible hands. But you forget Him immediately when your pocket is full.

Do not argue. You will not gain anything. Sit before your spiritual preceptor or a Mahatma quietly and meditate for an hour. Let the soul speak to the Soul. All your doubts will be cleared by themselves. You will have good experiences. You will enjoy a peculiar peace. There will be a holy thrill of joy in your heart. This is the way for your spiritual growth.

Follow not the voice of the mind. This voice will delude you. Follow the voice of the soul. This voice will lift you up and take you to the goal.

When you hear lectures or discourses that disturb your faith, that make your faith flicker, leave the place at once. Do not keep company with such people till you have grown, till you are established on the rock of divine love. Never budge an inch from your present position. Stand adamant on the bedrock of faith. May you have the intense living faith of Prahlada!

Abandon all sorts of wrong beliefs, superstitions, weaknesses, wrong notions and ideas of impossibilities. Cling fast to faith in divine possibilities. Have faith in divine life. Aspire fervently and constantly to live in the Divine.

Have faith in God. Have a proper understanding of the scriptures. If ignorant people with impure hearts and

perverted intellects read the *Gita, Ramayana or Bhagavata,* they will only try to find out mistakes through their habit of fault-finding. They will begin to discuss useless points such as: "Why did Rama kill a Sudra who was practising austerities in the forest? Is this justifiable? Why did Krishna do this and that? Why did the Avatara commit such mistakes?" Such people will not be benefited by the study of scriptures. Their minds are like a sieve. They will omit the essence that has to be grasped and misconstrue things. They see things in a wrong light. Only those who have purified their minds will be able to understand the real significance of the teachings of the scriptures.

Lord Rama killed a Sudra. The Sudra deserved such capital punishment because he murdered the son of a Brahmin. Rama did this act to maintain law, order and righteousness. Can you find any fault with the ruler of this universe, who is omniscient, who is the dispenser of the fruit of actions according to the nature of the Karmas of Jivas? Some orthodox and narrow-minded persons twist the truth and play mischief. It is priest-craft and religious cheating.

Lord Rama is the Supreme Soul, the silent witness, the protector of all beings. He is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. He is Lord Hari. He is never born. He never dies. Lord Hari simply manifested in the form of Rama to uplift the world and then vanished. He had a body of consciousness though to all appearances it looked like flesh. Remember this understand this point clearly.

It is simply foolishness to bring Lord Rama or Lord Krishna to the level of ordinary human beings and to argue as to whether their acts were justified or not. There are some idle people who, for the sake of curiosity, indulge in such talk just to while away the time in unnecessary discussions to show that they are also learned and religious-minded.

People of this kind do not do any kind of Sadhana. They have no dispassion and waste their time in idle gossiping. They lack faith in God and in His Lilas. There is no practical Vedanta these days. There is only Vedantic gossiping. It is blasphemy to say that Lord Rama did a wrong act. A real aspirant will never indulge in such frivolous talk. Time is fleeting. Every moment must be well utilised in His worship and service. There is no use arguing. You must do something practical and cross this ocean of infatuation in this very birth. Religion is realisation. We must live an ideal spiritual life every second. Whenever friends indulge in such topics, turn a deaf ear, keep silent or leave the place immediately. You will then experience peace. You will save much time for your spiritual Sadhana.

Religion is not for discussion around a club table. Religion is faith for knowing and worshipping God. Religion is practical life in the eternal Atman through earnest, protracted Sadhana for years, after withdrawing the turbulent senses from sense-objects and controlling the mind.

Just as coloured water penetrates freely and nicely a piece of pure white cloth, so also the instructions of a sage can penetrate and settle down in the hearts of aspirants only when their minds are calm, when there are no desires for enjoyments and when the impurities have been destroyed. That is the reason why an aspirant is expected to possess the qualifications of discrimination, dispassion, self-restraint, faith, withdrawal of the senses and calmness before he practises hearing of the *Srutis*, reflection and meditation. Discipline and purification of the mind and the senses are the prerequisites for an aspirant on the path of Truth and God-realisation.

Even when God is explained, those who have not been purged of their faults and impurities either disbelieve or misbelieve it, as was the case with Indra, Virochana and others. Therefore, knowledge arises only

in him who has, by means of austerities performed either in this birth or in many previous births, purified himself. The *Sruti* says: "To that high-souled man whose devotion to the Lord is great, and whose devotion to his preceptor is as great as that to the Lord, these secrets explained become illumined".

Lord Hari manifested in the forms of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers and for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "The foolish disregard Me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the Great Lord of all beings". Study the Gita, *Ramayana, Bhagavata* and other scriptures and have a proper understanding. Do not be carried away by the turbulent senses, by the influences of your useless friends and idle discussions. By devotion and faith know Him in essence and, through His Grace attain supreme bliss, supreme peace and supreme knowledge. May God bless you!

3
The Doubter is Doomed

The ignorant, the faithless, the doubting self, goes to destruction: there is neither this world nor the other, nor happiness for the doubting.

(IV-40)

Belief in God is an indispensable requisite for every human being. It is a *sine qua non.* Owing to the force of ignorance, pain appears as pleasure. The world is full of miseries, troubles, difficulties and tribulations. The world is a ball of fire. The fourfold mind (mind, intellect, ego and subconscious mind), charged with attraction, repulsion, anger and jealousy, is a blazing furnace. We have to free ourselves from birth, death, old age, disease and grief. This can be done only through faith in God. There is no other way. Money and power cannot give us real happiness. Even if we exercise suzerainty over the whole world, we cannot be free from care, worry, anxiety, fear and disappointment. It is only faith in God and the consequent God-realisation through meditation that can give us real, eternal happiness and free us from all kinds of fear and worry which torment us at every moment. Faith in God will force us to think of Him constantly and to meditate on Him, and will eventually lead us on to God-realisation.

Belief in God and God-realisation will give us supreme peace. In that peace comes the extinction of all pains. We will be bewildered no longer. We will be released from bondage to actions. We will become immortal. We will obtain divine wisdom. We will reach a place whence there is no return to this world of miseries, our sins being dispelled by divine wisdom. Our minds will ever remain balanced. We will neither rejoice on

obtaining what is pleasant nor feel sorry on obtaining what is unpleasant. We will have a calm inner instrument (the fourfold mind). We will be ever established in the Divine Consciousness. We will get happiness exempt from decay. We will become one with God and get eternal, infinite, unbroken bliss. When we are established in the Divine Consciousness we will not be shaken even by heavy sorrow. We will get happiness beyond the reach of the senses.

God will give us full security if we worship Him with unswerving devotion and undivided attention. He will give us the Yoga of discrimination to enable us to reach Him easily. Out of pure compassion for us, He destroys the ignorance-born darkness by the shining lamp of wisdom. He speedily lifts us from the ocean of worldly existence if we fix our minds on Him steadily with devotion and faith. We will cross over the three qualities and, liberated from birth, death, old age and sorrow, drink the nectar of immortality. By devotion and faith we will know Him in essence and will enter into His very Being. Through His Grace we will overcome all obstacles.

If we have no faith in God, we will be born again in this world and undergo considerable misery. The ignorant, faithless, doubting self goes to destruction. He cannot enjoy the least happiness. Neither this world nor that beyond is there for the doubting self. Those who have no faith in God do not know what is right and what is wrong. They have lost the power of discrimination. They are untruthful, proud and egoistic and are given to excessive greed, wrath and lust. They hoard money by unlawful means and become men of demoniacal nature. They commit various kinds of atrocious crimes. They are thrown into demoniacal wombs. They sink into the lowest depths, deluded birth after birth.

An aspirant begins to doubt whether God exists or not, whether he will succeed in his God-realisation or not, whether he is doing his practices rightly or not. Lack of faith is a dangerous obstacle on the spiritual path. The

student slackens his efforts when these doubts appear. Maya, the illusory power of God, is very powerful. Mysterious is this Maya. It misleads people through doubts and forgetfulness. The mind is Maya. It deludes people through doubts. Sometimes the aspirant gives up his Sadhana altogether. This is a serious mistake. Whenever a doubt tries to overpower any student, he should at once take recourse to the company of Mahatmas and remain with them for some time under the influence of their spiritual currents. He should clear his doubts by conversing with them.

Generally, an aspirant commences Sadhana with the expectation of so many Siddhis within a short time. When he does not get them, he gets dejected and stops his practices. This is the trouble in almost all cases. He thinks that the Kundalini will be awakened within six months and he will have clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading and flying in the air. He entertains so many fantastic and romantic ideas.

In the mind there is doubt. There is reality also. A doubt arises as to whether there is a God or not. This is termed Samsaya-Bhavana. Another doubt crops up whether one can realise Brahman or not. Then a third voice says, "God or Brahman is real. He is a solid, concrete Reality, just like an *amalaka* fruit in the hand. He is a mass of knowledge and Ananda. I can realise Him."

If we have clearly understood something the ideas of that thing are well-grounded and ingrained. Some ideas are hazy and not firm. They come and go. We will have to cultivate ideas and ground them till they are firmly fixed and implanted. Clarification of ideas will remove perplexity and confusion in the mind.

When a doubt arises as to whether there is a God or not, whether one will succeed in Self-realisation or not, it must be dispelled by means of well-directed, strong suggestions and affirmations such as: "It is true. I will

succeed. There is no doubt of this. In my dictionary, in my vocabulary, there are no such words as 'can't', 'impossible' and 'difficult'."

Everything is possible under the sun. Nothing is difficult when you firmly make up your mind. Strong determination and firm resolution will bring sanguine success in every affair or undertaking.

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and for getting it one-pointed. Concentration is a question of practice over several lives. Concentration is the most difficult thing in the world. One should not get dejected after some practice for some months or for one or two years. Even if you do a little Sadhana, the effect will be there. The spiritual impressions will be there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of Nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practice as you have not a subtle intellect, and as you have many kinds of impurities from beginningless time. You must develop dispassion, patience and perseverance to a maximum degree; you must have an unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficacy of spiritual practices. You must have a strong determination: "I will realise God right now in this very birth, nay, in this very second. I will realise or die."

Some one hundred and fifty years ago there lived a very famous Yogi and Jnani by name Sadasiva Brahmendra Saraswati. He lived in Nerur, near Karur, in the district of Tiruchirappalli, in South India. He is the author of *Brahma-Sutra Vritti, Atma-Vidya Vilasa* and various other books. He performed innumerable miracles.

Once, when he was absorbed in Samadhi on the banks of the Cauvery, he was carried away by the flood and thrown somewhere else. He was buried deep in the sand. Labourers went to plough the fields and struck the

head of the Yogi and some blood oozed out. To their great astonishment, they found a Yogi seated in Samadhi.

On another occasion, as a naked mendicant, he entered the Zenana of a Mohammedan chief. The chief was quite enraged at the appearance of the sage in a nude state. In a fit of fury he cut off one of the arms of the Mahatma. Sadasiva Brahmendra walked away without uttering a word and without showing any sign of pain. The chief was greatly astonished at this strange condition of the sage. He realised that he must be a great Mahatma, a superhuman being. He repented greatly and followed the sage to apologise. Sadasiva never knew that his arm had been cut off. When the chief narrated to him what had happened in the camp, Sadasiva forgave him and simply touched his maimed arm. He immediately had a new one.

It is the life of Sadasiva Brahman that made a very deep impression on my mind. I came to a very definite conclusion that there was a sublime, divine life independent of objects and the play of the mind and senses. The sage was quite unconscious of the world. He was unconcerned when his arm was cut off. He must have been absorbed in the Divine Consciousness and been one with the Divine.

Ordinary people yell even when there is a pin-prick in their body. When I heard about the marvellous incident in the life of Sadasiva Brahmendra and read about it in the book, it gave me a very strong conviction in a Divine Existence and in a divine, eternal life where all sorrows melt all desires are satisfied and one gets supreme bliss, supreme peace and supreme knowledge.

4

Scriptures are the Authority

He who, having cast aside the ordinance of the scriptures, acts under the impulse of desire, attains neither perfection nor happiness nor the supreme goal.

Therefore, let the scriptures be thy sole authority in determining what ought to be done or what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the ordinances of the scriptures, thou shouldst act here.

(XVI-23 & 24)

Reason cannot be the authority in the matter of Dharma. Undeveloped persons cannot think for themselves.

In the matter of Dharma, the scriptures are the only authority. You cannot know the truth about Dharma through any source of knowledge other than the scriptures.

The *Sruti* and the *Smriti* are the two authoritative sources of Hinduism. *Sruti* literally means "what is heard" and *Smriti* means "what is remembered". *Sruti* is revelation. *Smriti* is tradition. What is revealed is *Sruti*. The Upanishad is a *Sruti*. What is remembered is *Smriti*. The Bhagavad Gita is a *Smriti*.

Sruti is direct experience. Great Rishis heard the eternal truths of religion and left a record of them for the benefit of posterity. These records constitute the *Vedas*. Hence the *Sruti* is the primary authority. The *Smriti* is a recollection of that experience. Hence it is a secondary authority. The *Smritis* or *Dharma Shastras* also are books written by sages, but they are not the final authority. If there is anything in a *Smriti* which contradicts the *Sruti*, the *Smriti* is to be rejected. The *Bhagavad Gita* also is a *Smriti*. So is the *Mahabharata* also.

The *Smritis* or secondary scriptures are the ancient, sacred law-codes of the Hindus dealing with the Sanatana Varnashrama Dharma. They supplement and explain the ritualistic injunctions called Vidhis in the Vedas. The *Smriti* or *Dharma Shastra* is founded on the *Sruti*. The *Smritis* are based on the teachings of the Vedas. The *Smriti* stands next in authority to the Sruti. It explains and develops Dharma. It lays down the laws which regulate the national, social, family and individual obligations of the Hindus.The words which are expressly called *Smritis* are the law books, the *Dharma Shastras*. *Smriti*, in a broader sense, covers all Hindu *Shastras* save the Vedas.

The laws for regulating Hindu society are from time to time codified in the *Smritis*. The *Smritis* have laid down definite rules and laws to guide the individuals and communities in their daily conduct and to regulate their manners and customs. The *Smritis* have given detailed instructions, according to the conditions of the time, to all classes of men regarding their duties in life.

From these *Smritis* the Hindu learns how to spend his whole life. The duties of Varnashrama and all ceremonies are clearly given in these books. The *Smritis* prescribe certain acts and prohibit some others for a Hindu, according to his birth and stage of life. The object of the *Smritis* is to purify the heart of man and make him perfect and free.

These *Smritis* have varied from time to time. The injunctions and prohibitions of the *Smritis* are related to particular social surroundings. As these surroundings and essential conditions of the Hindu society changed from time to time, new Smritis had to be compiled by the sages of different ages and different parts of India.

From time to time, a great law-giver would take his birth. He would codify the existing laws and remove those which had become obsolete. He would make some alterations, adaptations, readjustments, additions and

deletions, to suit the needs of the time and see that the way of living of the people would be in accordance with the teachings of the Vedas. Of such law-givers, Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara were the most celebrated persons. Hindu society is founded upon and governed by the laws made by these three great sages. The Smritis are named after them. We have the *Manu Smriti* or the "Laws of Manu" or the "Institutes of Manu"; the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* and the *Parasara Smriti*. Manu was the great law-giver of the race. He was the oldest law-giver as well. The *Yajnavalkya Smriti* follows the same general lines as the Manu Smriti and is next in importance to it. The Manu Smriti and the *Yajnavalkya Smriti* are universally accepted at the present time as authoritative works all over India. The *Yajnavalkya Smriti* is chiefly consulted in all matters of Hindu law. Even the Government of India is applying some of these laws.

There are eighteen main *Smritis* or *Dharma Shastras*. The most important are those of Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara. The other fifteen are those of Vishnu, Daksha, Apastamba, Samvarta, Vyasa, Harita, Satatapa, Vasishtha, Yama, Gautama, Devala, Sankha-Likhita, Usana, Atri and Saunaka.

The laws of Manu were intended for the Satya Yuga; those of Yajnavalkya were for the Treta Yuga; those of Sankha-Likhita were for the Dwapara Yuga; and those of Parasara are for the present Kali Yuga.

The rules and laws which are based entirely upon our social position, time and clime, must change with changes in society and the changing conditions of time and clime. Then only can the progress of Hindu society be ensured.

It is not possible to follow some of the laws of Manu at the present time. We can follow their spirit and not the letter. Society is advancing. When it advances, it outgrows certain laws which were valid and helpful at a particular stage of its growth. Many new conditions

which were not thought out by the old law-givers have come into existence now. It is no use asking people to follow now those old laws which have become obsolete.

Our present society has changed considerably. A new *Smriti* to suit the requirements of this age is very necessary. Another sage must place before the Hindus of our days a new, suitable code of laws. The time is ripe for a new *Smriti.* Cordial greetings to this sage.

I shall speak a word on conscience. Some people say, "We can find out good and evil, right and wrong, by consulting our conscience only." No individual will be able to do this by consulting his conscience only. It may give some clue and help, but in difficult and trying conditions, it will not help one. Conscience is not an infallible guide. The conscience of a man changes according to the experiences and education he has had. Conscience is one's intellectual conviction only. The conscience of the individual speaks in accordance with his own tendencies, proclivities, inclinations, education, habits and passions. The conscience of a savage speaks a language that is entirely different from that of a civilised European. The conscience of an African Negro speaks a language that is vastly different from that of an ethically developed Yogi of India. Ask a clerk at the collectorate, "What are your duties?" He will say, "I must earn money and support my family and parents. I must not injure others. I must read the *Ramayana.*"He has not the least idea of the laws of Nature. If you ask him, "What are your duties to the country and humanity? What are right and wrong? What are good and evil?" he will simply blink. Ask any vehicle driver, "What is your duty?" He will say, "I must anyhow earn Rs. 20 daily. I have to purchase ten gallons of fuel, tyres, tubes and crude oil. The tyres are very costly. I have six daughters and five sons. I have to take care of them." If you ask him anything about God, about moral virtues, liberation, bondage and freedom, about right and wrong, he will be bewildered. Why is there so much divergence between the promptings of

conscience of two persons of the same caste, religion and creed? Why do we find ten different convictions among ten persons of the same district and the same community? The voice of conscience alone is not sufficient to guide man in understanding the law of God, about right and wrong, good and evil and other duties of life. The *Shastras* and realised persons only can truly guide a man in the discharge of his duties in an efficient manner.

Dear friend, do your duties in a satisfactory manner. Consult the *Shastras* and the Mahatmas whenever you are in doubt. As you have not the ability or the time to think of the moral principles and rules given in the scriptures, you can get the moral precepts or instructions from the sages and saints and follow them to the very letter. Evolve. Expand. Grow. Develop and realise the Satchidananda Atman.

5

Bond Between Guru & Disciple

Know that by long prostration, by question and by service the wise, who have realised the Truth, will instruct thee in that knowledge.

(IV-34)

The traditional concept of the Guru is a unique and wonderful gem in the cultural treasury of India. It is our most precious possession. For, it is this concept that is to a large extent responsible for the safe and unbroken perpetuation of some of the most precious aspects of our nation's grand spiritual heritage. It is the institution of Guru-Parampara (Guru-disciple lineage), that has, from generation to generation and down the centuries, closely safeguarded and handed down the living experiences of the seers of the Upanishadic age. This sacred task it has performed in spite of many a violent vicissitude in our nation's history.

Spiritual knowledge is a matter of Guru-Parampara. It is handed down from the Guru to the disciple. Study the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. You will have a comprehensive understanding. Gaudapadacharya imparted Self-knowledge to his disciple Govindacharya; Govindacharya to his disciple Sankara; and Sankara to Sureswaracharya. Matsyendranath imparted divine knowledge to his disciple Gorakhnath, Gorakhnath to Nivrittinath, and Nivrittinath to Jnanadev. Totapuri imparted knowledge to Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna to Swami Vivekananda. It was sage Ashtavakra who moulded the life of Raja Janaka. It was Gorakhnath who shaped the spiritual destiny of Raja Bhartrihari. It was Lord Krishna who made Arjuna and

Uddhava get themselves established on the spiritual path when their minds were in an unsettled state.

All the great ones had their teachers. Swetaketu leant the nature of Brahman from sage Uddalaka; Maitreyi from the great seer, Yajnavalkya; Bhrigu from Varuna; Narada Rishi from Sanatkumara; Nachiketas from Yama; Indra from Prajapati. Several others humbly went to the wise ones, observed strict Brahmacharya, practised rigorous discipline and leant Brahma-Vidya from them. All sophistry and ostentation, learning and conceit, have to be cast aside before the disciple approaches the Guru. The whole personality of the pupil should be effaced if the wisdom of the teacher is to illumine the self of the pupil.

"To that great one who has supreme devotion to God and as much devotion to the Guru as to God, do the truths become illumined", says the *Svetasvatara Upanishad.*

There is a good deal of heated debate and controversy amongst people on the matter of the necessity of a Guru. Some assert with vehemence and force that a preceptor is not at all necessary for attaining Self-realisation and spiritual advancement, and that one can have spiritual progress and Self-illumination through one's own efforts only. They quote various passages from the scriptures and assign arguments and reasonings to support them. Others boldly assert with greater emphasis and force that no spiritual progress is possible for a man, however intelligent he may be and however hard he may attempt and struggle on the spiritual path, unless he gets the benign Grace and direct guidance of a spiritual preceptor to whom he submits himself.

Now, open your eyes and note carefully what is going on in this world in all walks of life. Even a cook needs a teacher. He serves under a senior cook for some years. He obeys him implicitly. He pleases his teacher in all

possible manner. He learns all the techniques of cooking. He gets knowledge through the grace of the senior cook, his teacher. A junior lawyer wants the help and guidance of a senior advocate. Students of mathematics and medicine need the help and guidance of a professor. A student of science, music or astronomy wants the guidance of a scientist, a musician or an astronomer. When such is the case with ordinary secular knowledge, what to speak of the inner spiritual path wherein the student has to walk alone with closed eyes!

When you are in a thick jungle you come across several cross footpaths. You are in a dilemma. You do not know the directions and the path by which you should go. You are bewildered. You want a guide here to direct you along the right path.

It is universally admitted that an efficient teacher is needed in all branches of knowledge on this physical plane, and that physical, mental and moral culture and growth can be had only through the help and guidance of a capable master. This is a universal and inexorable law of Nature. Why do you deny then, friend, the application of this universally accepted law in the realm of spirituality alone?

The spiritual path is thorny, rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped in darkness. The guidance of a Guru who has already trodden the path is imperatively necessary. He will be able to throw light on the path and remove obstacles.

The spiritual path is not like writing a thesis for the *M.A.* examination. The help of a teacher is necessary at every moment. Young aspirants become self-sufficient, arrogant and self-assertive in these days. They do not care to carry out the instructions of a Guru. They do not wish to have a Guru. They want independence from the very beginning. They mistake licentiousness or "having their own ways and sweet will" for freedom. This is a serious, lamentable mistake. This is the reason why they

do not grow. They lose faith in the efficacy of Sadhana and in the existence of God. They wander about in a happy-go-lucky manner without any aim, from Kashmir to Gangotri, and then from Gangotri to Rameswaram, talking some nonsense on the way, something from *Vichar Sagar*, something from the *Panchadasi* and pose as *Jivanmuktas*.

Some do meditation for some years independently. Later on they feel acutely the necessity of a Guru because they come across some obstacles on the way. They do not know how to proceed further and how to overcome these impediments or stumbling blocks. Then they begin to search for a master.

A stranger in a big city finds it difficult to return to his residence in a small avenue though he has walked along the way half a dozen times. When difficulty arises even in the case of finding out the way through streets and roads, how much more difficult it should be on the path of spirituality where one walks alone with closed eyes!

The Guru must not only have a knowledge of the Vedas and *Upanishads* but must be established in Brahman also. Mere study of books cannot make one a Guru. Only he who has studied the *Vedas* and has direct knowledge of the Atman through inner personal experience can be considered a Guru. If you find peace in the presence of a Mahatma and if your doubts are removed by his very presence, you can take him as your Guru.

A Guru is one who has full Self-illumination and who removes the veil of ignorance in deluded Jivas. Guru, Truth, Brahman, Isvara, Atman, God and Om are all synonymous terms. The number of realised souls may be less in this Kali Yuga when compared to the Satya Yuga, but they are always present to help aspirants. They are always searching for qualified aspirants.

In olden days the aspirants were required to live with the Guru for a number of years so that the latter could study the students thoroughly. The food during spiritual practice, what to practise and how, whether the students are qualified for the path of Yoga, the temperament of the aspirants as well as other items have to be considered and judged by the Guru. It is the Guru who should decide whether the aspirants are fit for advanced practices, practices of a middling type or elementary practices. He will then prescribe different kinds of exercises for each type. Sadhana differs according to the nature, capacity and qualification of the aspirant. After understanding the theory of Yoga, one has to learn the practice from an experienced Yogi Guru. As long as there is this world, there will be books on Yoga and teachers also. You will have to search for them with faith, devotion and earnestness. You can get easy lessons from the Guru and practise them at home also in the initial stages. When you have advanced a little you will have to stay with the Guru to learn and master the difficult exercises. The personal contact with the Guru has manifold advantages. You will be greatly benefited by the magnetic aura of your Guru.

For the practice of Bhakti Yoga and Vedanta you do not require a Guru at your side. After learning the Srutis for some time from a Guru, you have to reflect and meditate alone in entire seclusion, whereas in Kundalini Yoga you have to break up the Granthis and take the Kundalini from Chakra to Chakra. These are all difficult processes. The method of uniting the Apana and the Prana and sending it along the Sushumna and breaking the Granthis needs the help of a Guru. You have to sit at the Guru's feet for a long time. You have to understand clearly the location of the Nadis and Chakras and the techniques of the Yogic Kriyas.

Lay before your Guru the secrets of your heart. The more you do so, the greater will be the sympathy and help you will get from him. This sympathy means an

accession of strength to you in the struggle against sin and temptation.

The Guru often tests the students in various ways. Some students misunderstand him and lose their faith. Hence they are not benefited. Those who stand the tests boldly come out successful in the end. The periodical examinations in the spiritual university of sages are very stiff indeed. In days of yore the tests were very severe.

Once Gorakhnath asked some of his students to climb up a tall tree and hurl themselves, head downwards, on a very sharp trident. Many faithless students kept quiet, but one devoted student at once climbed up the tree with lightning speed and threw himself down. He was protected by the invisible hand of Gorakhnath. He had immediate Self-realisation. This student had no attachment to his body. The other faithless students had very strong infatuation and ignorance.

Guru Govind Singh tested his students also. He said to them, "My dear disciples, if you have real devotion to me, let six of you come forward and give me your heads. Then we can have success in our attempt in the war." Two faithful disciples only offered their heads. Guru Govind Singh took them into the camp and cut off the heads of two goats instead.

Sankara once wanted to test the devotion of his disciple, Padmapada. The river Cauvery was in full flood. Sankara stood on one bank of the river and Padmapada on the other. Sankara then beckoned to Padmapada to come to him at once. There was no boat at the moment. Padmapada, not caring for his life, at once jumped into the river although he did not know how to swim. By the Grace of Sankara, at each step in the water, a lotus flower appeared to support the foot of Padmapada. Hence his name, Padmapada. "Padma" means lotus; "Pada" means feet.

Some, like Yogi Milarepa, had to serve their masters arduously for a long time, whereas others got initiation in a flash. It depends upon the spiritual Sadhana and evolution of the aspirant. Yogi Milarepa underwent a series of struggles during his service of his Guru. He had to perform superhuman acts of heroism and bravery before he was initiated. Sages and Rishis of yore put their students through severe trials before they took them into their confidence. They knew intuitively whether a student was fit for initiation or not. The neophytes were entrusted with the task of tending the cattle, bringing fuel from the forest, washing the clothes of the Guru, and such other works which appear menial in the eyes of the present-day aspirants. To aspirants like Svetaketu, Indra, Satyakama and others, every act was an act of Yoga or worship of the Guru. To them nothing was menial. They dedicated everything to their master with unselfish motive. Therefore, they attained purification of the heart quickly. They studied and mastered the Vedas and finally acquired the knowledge of the Supreme Self.

Gautama chose four hundred lean and weak cows and requested Satyakama Jabala, his disciple, to tend them. He instructed Satyakama not to return before the number had become a thousand. Satyakama lived in the forest for a long time. A few days prior to his departure to his preceptor's hermitage, the gods Vayu, Agni and Surya instructed him in the knowledge of Brahman. Gautama was astonished to see Satyakama shining with Brahmic splendour in his face.

Ashtavakra initiated King Janaka in the twinkling of an eye. The Devas initiated Khatvanga in a Muhurta. Some initiate their students through simple gazing. Sri Sankara inspired Totaka through his mere thought-power. Therefore, it depends upon the ability, capacity and purity of the aspirant to receive the Divine Grace which will elevate him to exalted heights of supreme joy and bliss.

The aspirant should be ever watchful to receive spiritual instruction from whatever source it may come. Anyone who helps him in removing his ignorance is a guide. But he who hastens the aspirant's spiritual progress and takes a lively and keen interest in his evolution, is the real Sadguru.

Just note how Dattatreya attained knowledge of the Self from even insentient beings. The aspirant, before he desires the Grace of the master, should deserve it. The supply of Divine Grace comes only when there is a real thirst in the aspirant and only when he is fit to receive it.

The Guru will find out, through a close study of the aspirant, the latter's tastes, temperament and capacity, and decide for him the most suitable path. If the aspirant's heart is impure, the teacher will prescribe selfless service for a number of years. Then the Guru will find out for what particular path the student is fit and initiate him in that path. A Bhakta will be initiated by a Bhakta saint in the path of devotion. A Jnani will initiate a student of Vedanta in the Mahavakyas. A Hatha Yogi or a Raja Yogi can initiate another in that particular path. But a sage of perfect realisation, a full-blown Jnani or a perfected Yogi, can give initiation in any particular path. A sage like Sri Sankara or Madhusudhana Saraswati can initiate an aspirant in any particular path for which the latter is fit.

If a Bhakta saint is approached by an aspirant who wants to follow the path of knowledge, the former may direct the latter to a proper Guru for initiation, because the Bhakta saint might not have had the Vedantic realisation of oneness. But a Jnani can initiate an aspirant in the path of Bhakti also, because he has already realised the fruit of Saguna worship in the present or in a previous birth.

It is very difficult to know the particular Yoga by which the Guru has reached perfection, unless he himself reveals it to the aspirant out of compassion. No

aspirant will be bold enough to put this question to his Guru lest he should be considered impertinent. Except in the case of advanced aspirants, initiation comes after long and patient service of the preceptor. Both the Guru and the disciple should be well acquainted with the nature of each other. The student should be able to know thoroughly the ideals and principles of his Guru, and the Guru must be able to detect the mistakes and imperfections in the student. The Guru should be allowed to make a complete study of the aspirant's inner nature. The student should lay bare before his preceptor all his weaknesses and shortcomings. He should allow himself to be tested by his Guru in the crucible of suffering in a variety of ways so that his Guru may have full confidence in him.

The disciple also should come into closer contact with the Guru during his service and try to imbibe all his Guru's good qualities. The disciple should never try to find fault with the Guru in thought, word or deed. If the fault-finding nature is strong in the disciple, he cannot imbibe anything from the preceptor and his spiritual progress will be at a standstill. Firstly, the student must admit his weaknesses before the Guru. He must place before the Guru all his difficulties and then alone will the teacher be able to remove the pitfalls and snares through efficient and potent means.

The student and the teacher should live together as a father and devoted son or as a husband and wife, with extreme sincerity and devotion. The aspirant should have an eager, receptive attitude to imbibe the teachings of the master. Then only will he be spiritually benefited. Otherwise, there is not the least hope of a spiritual life for the aspirant, nor is there any chance of a complete regeneration of his old diabolic nature.

It is a great pity that the present system of education in India is not favourable for the spiritual growth of aspirants. The minds of the students are saturated with materialistic poison. Aspirants of the present day have

not any idea of the true relationship between the Guru and disciple. It is not like the relationship between a student and a teacher or a professor in schools and colleges. Spiritual relationship is entirely different. It involves dedication. It is very sacred. It is purely divine.

O seekers of Truth! it is imperative that you should recognise the deep implications of a life dedicated to the cause of Truth, to the cause of God-realisation, and seek the protection of the Guru if you are to have real success in spiritual Sadhana. Abandon prejudices, wrong notions of self-sufficiency and pride of intellect. Purify your heart. Be simple and straightforward. Have a genuine aspiration for freedom from mortal life. Correct discriminative understanding, complete dispassion for things mundane, self-restraint, tranquillity of mind, and a strong yearning for liberation are the prerequisites for studying under a spiritual preceptor. With these qualifications, he who reverentially seeks the guidance of the preceptor shall be blessed with the saving knowledge.

Give up the delusive notion that to submit oneself to the preceptor, to obey and to carry out his instructions, is slavish mentality. The ignorant man thinks that it is beneath his dignity and against his freedom to submit to the command of another. This is a grave blunder. If you reflect carefully, you will see that your individual freedom is in reality absolute slavery to your own ego and vanity. It is nothing but the vagaries of the sensual mind. He who attains victory over the mind and the ego is the truly free man. He is a hero. It is for attaining this victory that a man submits to the higher spiritualised personality of a Guru. Through this submission he vanquishes his lower ego and realises the bliss of the infinite Consciousness.

Have an iron determination to realise the Supreme Divine Being. Know Him through the Grace of your Guru. Start your efforts in the right direction. Yes, do it now!

6

The Caste System

The fourfold caste has been created by Me according to the differentiation of Guna and Karma: though I am the author thereof, know Me as non-doer and immutable.

(IV-13)

Of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, as also Sudras, O Parantapa! the duties are distributed according to the qualities born of their own nature.

(XVIII-41)

The four castes are the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. This division is according to the Guna and Karma. Guna is quality. Karma is the kind of work. Guna and Karma determine the caste of a man.

There are three qualities or Gunas-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva is purity. Rajas is passion. Tamas is inertia. These three qualities are found in man in varying proportions. Sattva preponderates in some persons. They are the Brahmanas. They are the wise persons or thinkers. They are the priests, ministers or philosophers who guide kings or rulers. In some others, Rajas is predominant. They are the Kshatriyas. They are warriors or men of action. They fight enemies or invaders and defend the country. Then in the third group the quality of Tamas is predominant. They are the Vaishyas or traders. They do business and engage in agriculture and amass wealth. Sudras are the servants. None of the three qualities is highly developed in them. They serve the other three castes.

In a broad sense, a Sattvic man who is pious and virtuous and leads the divine life, is a Brahmin; a Rajasic man with heroic qualities is a Kshatriya; a Rajasic man

with business tendencies is a Vaishya; and a Tamasic man is a Sudra.

Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, and also uprightness, knowledge, realisation and belief in God, are the duties of the Brahmanas, born of their own nature.

Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, not fleeing from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of the Kshatriyas, born of their own nature.

Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaishyas, born of their own nature.

And action consisting of service is the duty of the Sudras, born of their own nature.

The underlying principle in the caste system or Varna Dharma is division of labour. Rishis studied human nature carefully. They came to the conclusion that all men were not equally fit for all types of work. Hence they deemed it necessary to allocate different kinds of duties to different classes of people, according to their aptitude, capacity or quality. The Brahmanas were in charge of spiritual and intellectual affairs. The work of political administration and defence was given to the Kshatriyas. The Vaishyas were entrusted with the duty of supplying food for the nation and administering its economic welfare. The Sudras did the menial work. The Rishis felt all these needs of the Hindu nation and started the system of castes.

This division of labour began in Vedic times. In the Purusha Sukta of the *Rig Veda* there is a reference to the division of Hindu society into four classes. It is described there that the Brahmanas came out of the face of the Lord, the Creator, the Kshatriyas from His arms, the Vaishyas from His thighs, and the Sudras from His feet. The *Vedas* have taught that the Brahmana was the brain of society, the Kshatriya its arms, the Vaishya its stomach and the Sudra its feet.

There is no question of higher and lower here. There was once a quarrel among the senses, the mind and the Prana as to who was superior. There was a quarrel amongst the different organs and the stomach also. If the hands quarrel with the stomach, the entire body will suffer. If Prana departs from the body, all the organs will suffer. The head or the stomach cannot claim superiority over the feet and the hands. The hands and feet are as important as the stomach or the head.

If there is a quarrel amongst the different castes as to who is superior, then the entire social fabric will suffer. There will be disharmony, rupture and discord. A scavenger or a barber is as important as the Dewan or minister for the running of society. The social edifice is built on the law of spiritual economics. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Each class contributes its best to the commonweal or world-solidarity.

A Brahmin is no Brahmin if he is not endowed with purity and good character, if he leads a life of dissipation and immorality. A Sudra is a Brahmin if he leads a virtuous and pious life. What a great soul Vidura was! What a noble, candid, straightforward student Satyakama Jabala of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* was! Caste is a question of one's character. Varna is no more the colour of the skin but the colour of one's character or quality. Conduct and character count and not lineage alone. If one is a Brahmin by birth and at the same time if he possesses the virtues of a Brahmin, it is extremely good, because certain virtuous qualifications only determine the birth of a Brahmin.

The Hindus have survived many a foreign conquest on account of their caste system, but they have developed jealousy and hatred in the name of the caste system. They have not got the spirit of co-operation. That is why they are weak and disunited today. They have become sectarians in the name of the caste system. Hence the degradation in India.

The caste system is indeed a splendid thing. It is quite flawless, but the defect came in from somewhere else. The upper classes gradually neglected their duties. The test of ability and character slowly disappeared. Birth became the chief consideration in determining caste. All the castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties. The Brahmins became selfish and claimed superiority over others by mere birth, without possessing the necessary qualities. The Kshatriyas lost their chivalry and spirit of sacrifice. The Vaishyas became avaricious and greedy. They did not earn their wealth by honest means. They did not look after the economic welfare of the people. They did not do charity. They also lost the spirit of sacrifice. The Sudras gave up service. They became officers. They wished that others should serve them. The greed and pride of man created discord and disharmony.

There is nothing wrong in the caste system. It is arrogance and haughtiness in man that has brought trouble. Man or the little Jiva is imperfect. He is full of defects. He is simply waiting to claim superiority over others. The Brahmin thinks that the other three castes are inferior to him. The Kshatriya thinks that the Vaishya or Sudra is inferior to him. A rich Sudra thinks that he is superior to a poor Brahmin or a poor Kshatriya or Vaishya.

In the West and in the rest of the world also there still exists the caste system, though it is not so rigidly observed. Some of the Western philosophers have made a division of three classes, namely, philosophers, warriors and the masses. The philosophers correspond to the Brahmins, the warriors to the Kshatriyas, and the masses to the Vaishyas and Sudras. This system is indispensable to keep society in a state of perfect harmony and order.

Throughout the world this classification of caste exists. The priests and the clergymen represent the Brahmins. They practise meditation and engage in

religious preaching. The soldiers in the West are the Kshatriyas of Rajputana. The business people are the Vaishyas. Those who do menial service are the Sudras. This classification is according to the Gunas and Karma.

At the present moment the caste system is in name only. It has to be rebuilt properly. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras, who have fallen from their ideals, who are not doing their respective duties, must do so properly now. They must be educated on the right lines. They must raise themselves to their original lofty level. The sectarian spirit must die. They should develop a new, understanding heart of love and devotion, with a spirit of co-operation, sacrifice and service.

7

The Glory of Swadharma

Better is one's own duty, though devoid of merit, than the duty of another well discharged. Better is death in one's own duty; the duty of another is fraught with fear.

Better is one's own duty, though destitute of merits, than the duty of another well-performed. He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no sin.

(XVIII-47)

Just as the doctor prescribes different medicines for different people according to their constitutions and the nature of their diseases, so also Hinduism prescribes different duties for different people. The rules for women are different from the rules for men. The rules for different castes vary. But non-violence, truth, non-stealing, cleanliness and control of the senses are duties common to all men.

Dharma depends upon time, circumstance, age, degree of evolution and the community to which one belongs. The Dharma of this century is different from that of the tenth century.

Man has certain important duties and responsibilities in life. He has to evolve morally and spiritually by performing these duties in the right manner. He has to act and live in accordance to the law of God. He has to find out the rules of conduct and the measure of his responsibilities. He must have a thorough knowledge of the moral code of Manu and Yajnavalkya and act according to the rules laid down therein. Then only can he be rightly called a man.

Man has duties towards his parents, children and other family members. He has duties towards society and the country. He has duties of the Varnashrama. He has

duties towards his own self and, last but not the least, he has important duties towards God. He must fulfil all these duties of his life. Then only can he make progress in life.

He must serve his parents who have given him this physical body. He must serve them with great faith and feeling. In the *Taittirya Upanishad* you will find: "Matri devo bhava; pitri devo bhava—The parents should be worshipped as visible representatives of God".

Sri Ashutosh Mukerjee, the late Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, used to worship his mother daily and drink the water used to wash her feet before going to his office. Modern educated persons do not pay proper regard to their parents. If the father is uneducated and if the son is an England-returned man, he will say that his father is a servant of the house when someone puts him the question, "Who is this old man?"

Man must train his children in the proper manner. He must give them proper education in Sanskrit, English and technical subjects. He must train them on the path of spirituality from their early age. He must be devoted to his wife, who is his partner in life. No religious rite- is valid without her presence. He must regard his wife as a real helper on the path of spirituality. As soon as a son is born, she becomes his mother.

The *Srutis* declare: "*Atma vai jaayate putrah*—The soul is born as a son". Man must give up all ideas of husband-wife relationship as soon as a son is born. He must give up sexual intercourse. Both should lead a spiritual life. The husband should not regard his wife as a machine for procreation only. There is some higher spiritual purpose. She must help her husband in his spiritual evolution. She must attend to his wants and comforts always. She must serve him properly in all ways.

Man must serve society according to his temperament, taste and capacity. Such service will help

in the purification of his mind. He must serve with Nishkama Bhav as an honorary member. He should not get any remuneration. He must develop the spirit of patriotism. He must serve the country. Service of the country is service of Mother Kali. It is pure Mother-worship.

Man must perform the duties of his Varnashrama. A Brahmin should observe serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness and uprightness, and manifest wisdom, knowledge and belief in God. A Kshatriya should manifest prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, generosity and bravery, these qualities being the nature of a ruler. The Vaishya should engage in agriculture, trade and protection of cattle. The Sudra should serve the other three castes.

A Brahmachari should study religious books till he reaches the age of twenty-five. If he has taken the vow of celibacy till the end of life, if he wants to become a lifelong celibate, he need not enter the stage of a householder. He should have real, lasting dispassion and discrimination. Then only will he be really benefited. He can devote his whole life to spiritual pursuits.

If a Brahmachari does not want to take up the course of lifelong celibacy, he can become a householder. He can marry after finishing his education. He can visit his wife occasionally for bringing progeny to keep up the line and not for sensual gratification only. He will be still styled as a Brahmachari if he strictly adheres to all the rules as enumerated above.

After having completed the stage of a householder and after fixing up his son in a proper position, he can become a Vanaprastha, either alone or with his wife. He should not remain in the house till the end of life. He will have various anxieties and attachment for his children if he remains in the house. If he finds it difficult to leave the house, he can remain in a cottage nearby. If he finds this also difficult, he can remain in a solitary room in his

house and have interviews with visitors and members in the evening between 4p.m. and 5p.m.

If a Vanaprastha wants to take Sannyasa he can do so. Vanaprastha is only a preparatory stage for Sannyasa. The glory and freedom of a Sannyasin can hardly be described. A Sannyasin only can cut off all sorts of attachment. In the absence of Sannyasa, some sort of subtle connections will always remain. When one once takes Sannyasa, one becomes dead to the family members. Otherwise they will always think of getting something from the person. The subtle attachment in the mind still remains in both parties. This is quite sufficient to bring one back to the wheel of births and deaths. The very colour, the very orange robe gives strength and purity. I do not believe those who say that they have given colouring to their hearts. This is timidity and hypocrisy. There are still infatuation, attraction and desires lurking in them. If there is real internal change, the external change is bound to come. I do admit that the eradication of egoism, thoughts and desires does really constitute real Sannyasa, but the Ashrama-Bheda is absolutely necessary. Why then did Sri Sankara and Sri Ramakrishna take to Sannyasa? What is the necessity for this order at all? Sannyasa has its own advantages.

At the present moment the Ashramas cannot be lived exactly according to the details of the ancient rules, as the conditions have changed very much; but the Ashramas may be revived in their spirit for the improvement of modern life. In these stages no one should do the duty of another. The student or Brahmachari should not do the duties of a householder, a recluse or a Sannyasin. The householder should not perform the duties of a Brahmachari, a Vanaprastha or a Sannyasin. A Sannyasin should not seek again the joys of a householder.

Peace and order will prevail in society only if and when all people do their respective duties efficiently. The abolition of castes and Ashramas will cut at the very root

of social duties. How can the nation hope to live when the Varnashrama Dharma is not rigidly practised?

An ignorant worldly-minded man says, "I have to do my duties. I have to educate my four sons and three daughters. I have to please my employer. I have heavy duties in the office. I have to remit money to my widowed sister. I have a large family. I have six brothers and five sisters. Where is the time for performing Sandhya and Japa and study of religious books? There is no time even to breathe. I have no leisure. Even during holidays I have to work. I bring office papers to my house and work at night till eleven o!clock. I do not want Sannyasa or any yoga. The office work and the maintenance of my family is itself Yoga."

Do you really call this duty? It is mere slavery. It is bondage. The man is afraid of his superior at every moment. Even in his dreams he meets his office mates and superior and posts figures in the ledger. This is not sense of duty. This man cannot pray even for a second. He has no time to read a single verse of the Gita. There is not a single thought of God even in a month. He takes tea, has his food, sits at the table for writing, sleeps and procreates. Thus his whole life passes away like this. This is selfish work. This is not duty. This is work done for gain and satisfaction of the lower appetites. Anything done under compulsion and expectation is not duty. You must not interpret slavery as duty. You must not take selfish works that are done through attachment, greed and passion as duty. You will be doing a great injustice. This is selfcreated drudgery.

An officer or clerk earns money by taking bribes, and when his conscience pricks, he feeds some Brahmins and says, "I have done my duty today. I have fed fifteen Brahmins and have given each twenty-five paise." This is his idea of duty. He adds, "Why should I take Sannyasa and practise Yoga? I will earn tons of money and do charity. This is the best kind of life." Poor deluded soul! May God give him good understanding!

"Ahimsa paramo dharmah-Non-injury is the highest virtue". This injunction cannot be strictly practised by householders. It can be practised by Sannyasins who tread the path of renunciation. Only they will have to practise it. If a vagabond enters the house and tries to molest a lady, a householder cannot keep quiet. He cannot say, "I will not resist evil now." He will have to take a stick immediately and give the intruder a good thrashing.

Suppose a lady is in danger and somebody wants to murder her to take away her jewels. She seeks the shelter of a young, strong man for protection. It is the duty of this young man to resist evil and defend her by attacking the cruel man. He cannot say, "Ahimsa paramo dharmah" now. It is his duty to protect the lady, otherwise he fails in his duty.

Morality and duty vary according to circumstances. To resist evil becomes the duty of a man in certain circumstances. A king should always raise his rod of chastisement to keep peace and order in his country. He cannot say, "I will not resist evil-Ahimsa paramo dharmah." He will fail in the discharge of his duty if he does not punish the wicked. His country will be in a state of utter chaos. To hang a murderer or a dacoit is Ahimsa for a king. Himsa and Ahimsa are relative terms.

To kill a man who is taking away the lives of many is Ahimsa. To shoot a tiger, a man-eater, is Ahimsa. Have you understood the secret of Ahimsa now? A real Sannyasin should not defend himself even when his life is in danger. A Sannyasin is one who has no body and who identffles himself with Brahman or Atman.

To shoot a dog or a horse that is suffering from acute agony that cannot be alleviated, is Ahimsa to a European. He wants to free the dog from suffering. His motive is good.

I wish to point out to you again that morality and duty are relative terms. They change according to state of

life, stage of mental growth and evolution, time and circumstance, and the country in which one lives. To eat meat in Kashmir is perfectly moral for a Kashmiri pundit. To eat fish is perfectly moral for a Mohammedan or a Chinaman, but to a Hindu this is highly immoral. A gentleman or a lady can very easily have a divorce in the West. Marriage is a contract in the West, whereas in India it is a sacrament or holy act that is done before the sacred fire. Divorce is quite moral in the West, but it is highly immoral in the East. To an Arya Samajist, widow-marriage is quite moral; to a Sanatanist it is highly immoral. Polyandry is quite moral in Tibet, but it is highly immoral in the eyes of other people of other countries. It is perfectly moral for a Sikh to drink, but it is immoral for him to smoke. People of cold countries require meat and a little liquor to keep up heat and help digestion. A soldier needs meat to keep up his strength and martial spirit. A Brahmin or a Sannyasin wants vegetable food, milk and fruit to help his meditation and keep up his Satwic mental attitude. Rishi Visvamitra had to eat prohibited meat when his life was in jeopardy. Morality changes when one's life is at stake. Ignorant people hate others when they see them doing something which they themselves are not doing. A Madrasi vegetarian Brahmin hates a flesh-eating Bengali Brahmin. This is a sad mistake. This is highly lamentable. This retards one's spiritual growth. A Madrasi is horrified when he sees a Hindustani eating with both hands from the same plate as his children.

Similarly, the idea of duty also varies among people of different countries. An African Negro cannot do Agnihotra in his hot country in summer. A Kashmiri pundit cannot take a morning bath in winter in Kashmir. The duty of one class of people cannot be the duty of another class of people. The duty of a man of one state of life cannot be the duty of a man of another state of life. The duties of a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra are very much different. The duties of a Brahmachari, a

householder, a forest-dweller and Sannyasin are quite different. A householder cannot perform the duties of a Sannyasin. A Brahmin cannot do the duty of a soldier. To kill an enemy in the battlefield is the duty of a Kshatriya. To practise Ahimsa in thought, word and deed is the duty of a Sannyasin and also of a Brahmin. Man evolves quickly by performing rigidly the duties allotted to his station of life.

Nectar's sons! Children of immortality! Shake off all weaknesses. Stand up. Gird up the loins. Perform your Swadharma satisfactorily in accordance with your caste or stage of life. Evolve quickly in spirituality. Eternal bliss, supreme peace and infinite knowledge can be had only in God. Practice of Swadharma will surely lead to the attainment of God-consciousness. There is no happiness in finite objects. In the Infinite alone is bliss. Understand the truth through the practice of Swadharma. This world is unreal. It is like a mirage. The senses and mind deceive you at every moment. Wake up. Open your eyes. Learn to discriminate. Do not trust your senses. They are your enemies. It is very difficult to get a human birth. Life is short. Time is fleeting. Those who cling to the unreal things of the world are verily committing suicide. Struggle hard to practise your Swadharma. Keep the ideal before your eyes always. Have a programme of life. Attempt to realise the ideal. Stick to Swadharma with leech-like tenacity. Practise it and realise the Satchidananda state right now in this very second.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you all! May joy, bliss, immortality, peace and poise abide with you for ever! Glory, glory to Swadharma!

8

All Roads Lead to Rome

In whatever way men approach Me, even so do I reward them: My path do men tread in all ways, O son of Pritha!

(IV-11)

You may reach the same goal by different paths. Just as you can reach Mount Kailas by different paths, such as via Badrinath or Almora or Gangotri or Ladakh, so also you can reach the goal of life by different paths-Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga or Jnana Yoga.

Karma Yoga is the path of works. Bhakti Yoga is the path of love. Raja Yoga is the path of psychic control. Jnana Yoga is the path of self-analysis and knowledge. Just as you can reach Calcutta by train, car, aeroplane or steamer, so also you can reach the goal of life or your spiritual destination by any one of these four paths.

The four divisions are not hard and fast. There are no marked demarcation lines among the four paths. They are not cut and dried. They are not very rigid and marked. These paths are made in accordance to the temperament or tendency that is predominant in the individual. One path does not exclude the other paths. The path of action is suitable for a man of Karmic tendency. The path of love is adapted for a man of emotional temperament. The path of Raja Yoga is suited for a man of mystic temperament. The path of Vedanta or Jnana Yoga is suitable for a man of will and reason. Each path blends into the other. Ultimately, all these paths onverge and become one. It is very difficult to say where Raja Yoga ends and Jnana Yoga begins. All the aspirants

of the different paths meet on a common platform or junction in the long run.

Religion must educate and develop the whole man-his head, heart and hand. Then only will there be perfection. A one-sided development is not commendable. The four paths, far from being antagonistic to one another, indicate that the different methods of the Yoga system are in absolute harmony with one another. Karma Yoga leads to Bhakti Yoga, which in its tum leads to Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga brings Jnana. Karma Yoga removes the tossing of the mind, Raja Yoga steadies the mind, and Inana Yoga removes the veil of ignorance and brings in knowledge of the Self. Every Yoga is a fulfilment of the preceding one. Thus, Bhakti is the fulfilment of Karma, Raja Yoga of Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana of all the preceding three.

Supreme devotion is Jnana only. Bhakti, it should be borne in mind, is not divorced from Jnana. On the contrary, Jnana intensifies Bhakti. Sri Sankara, the great Adwaita Jnani, was a great Bhakta of Lord Hari, Hara and Devi. Jnanadev of Alandi, the eminent Yogi of Maharashtra, was a Bhakta of Lord Krishna. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped Kali and got Jnana through Swami Totapuri, his Adwaita Guru. Appayya Dikshitar, a famous Jnani of South India and the author of *Siddhanta Lesha* and other monumental works on Vedanta, was a devotee of Lord Shiva.

The practice of Karma Yoga prepares the aspirant for the reception of knowledge of the Self. It moulds him into a proper Adhikari or qualified aspirant for the study of Vedanta. Ignorant people jump at once to Jnana Yoga without having any preliminary training in Karma Yoga. That is the reason why they fail miserably in realising the Truth. The impurities still lurk in their minds. The mind is filled with likes and dislikes. They only talk of Brahman or God. They indulge in all kinds of useless discussions, vain debates and dry, endless controversies. Their philosophy is on their lips only. In

other words, they are lip-Vedantins. What is really wanted is practical Vedanta through ceaseless selfless service.

Those who follow the path of Karma Yoga should do work for the sake of work only, without any motive. Two things are indispensably requisite in the practice of Karma Yoga. A Karma Yogi should have extreme non-attachment to the fruit of his works; and secondly, he should dedicate all his actions at the altar of God with the feeling of self-surrender. Non-attachment brings freedom and immortality. Attachment is real death. Non-attachment is eternal life. Non-attachment makes a man absolutely fearless. When you thus consecrate all your actions to the Lord, you will naturally develop devotion to Him, and the greater the devotion the nearer you will be to the Lord. You will slowly begin to feel that God works directly through your body and senses. You will feel no strain in the discharge of your works now. The heavy load you felt previously on account of your false egoism will have now vanished out of sight, never to return.

Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion or the path of affection. It is suitable for people of devotional temperament or in whom the love element predominates. Ladies are fit for this path, because affection predominates in them. Generally, there is an admixture of the devotional and intellectual temperaments in all persons. Hence, Bhakti Yoga is suitable for the vast majority of persons. In Bhakti Yoga the devotee makes absolute and unreserved self-surrender. He depends upon the Lord for everything. He is extremely humble and meek. He develops devotion to the Lord gradually to a very high degree by repeating His Name, by studying the holy scriptures and by practising the nine modes of devotion.

Hearing the Name of the Lord, singing His glories, remembering His Presence, serving His Lotus Feet, bowing before Him, worshipping Him, attending on Him,

loving Him as a friend, and surrendering the self entirely to Him, are the nine modes of devotion. The devotee observes austerities, prays frequently to Him and offers mental worship. He serves his fellow-men, realising that the Lord alone dwells in the hearts of all. This is the Sadhana for those who wish to tread the path of the Yoga of devotion.

Bhakti is a means to an end. It gives purity of mind and removes mental oscillation or tossing of the mind. Sakama Bhakti or devotion with expectation brings Swarga for the devotee, while Nishkama Bhakti or devotion without any expectation, brings purity of the mind and Jnana.

The student treading the path of Raja Yoga has to ascend the spiritual ladder step by step, stage by stage. There are eight limbs in Raja Yoga. They are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. By practising Yama and Niyama at the outset, the student gets ethical training and purification of the mind. By developing friendship, mercy and complacency, he destroys hatred, jealousy and harshness of heart and thereby gets peace of mind. By practising Asanas, he steadies his posture and gets control and mastery over his body. Then he practises Pranayama to remove the tossing of the mind and destroy inertia. His body becomes light and elastic. By practising Pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses from sense-objects, he gets strength and peace of mind. Now he is fit for concentration, which comes by itself. He practises meditation and enters into Samadhi. By the combined practice of concentration, meditation and Samadhi, known as Yogic Samyama, he gets various psychic powers. By concentration on the senses, egoism and mind, he gets various powers and experiences. He now sees without eyes, tastes without a tongue, hears without ears, smells without a nose and feels without a skin. He can work miracles. He simply wills and everything comes into being.

Those who follow the path of Jnana Yoga or Vedanta should first acquire the "four means of salvation"-Viveka, Vairagya, Shad-Sampat and Mumukshutva.

Viveka is discrimination between the Real and the unreal. Vairagya is indifference or dispassion towards sensual objects herein and hereafter. Shad-Sampat is the sixfold virtue, namely, Sama or calmness of mind, Dama or restraint of the senses, Uparati or satiety, Titiksha or power of endurance, Shraddha or faith, and Samadhana or onepointedness of mind.

Mumukshutwa is intense longing for liberation. Having acquired these "four means of salvation", the students of Jnana Yoga should approach a Brahma-Nishtha Guru who has fully realised the Supreme Self, and hear the scriptures directly from his lips. Then they should reflect and meditate on what they have heard and attain Self-realisation. Now the Jnani exclaims in exuberant joy, "The Atman alone is! It is one without a second. I am Brahman. I am Shiva. I am He." He, the liberated soul, sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

A Karma Yogi does self-sacrifice to kill his little self. A Bhakta practises self-surrender to annihilate his egoism. A Jnani practises self-denial. The methods are different but all want to destroy this little, self-arrogating "I" which is the rootcause of human suffering. When this is done, they meet at the same goal or point.

Karma, Bhakti and Yoga are means to the end. Jnana is the end. Just as rivers join the sea, so also Karma, Bhakti and Yoga join the ocean of Jnana.

Karma Yoga prepares the mind for the reception of light or knowledge. It expands the heart and breaks all the barriers that stand in the way of unity or oneness. Bhakti and meditation are also mental Karmas. There can be no Jnana without Yoga. The fruit of Bhakti is Jnana. Have you understood now the nature of the four Yogas and their interrelation?

You should have your own ideal in life and exert in the accomplishment of this ideal. People vary in their capacities, in mental and intellectual calibre, and in physical and mental strength to do things. Therefore, different people should have different ideals. Then only can they evolve quickly. Then alone will they realise sure and rapid progress. The ideal of one man will not suit another. If one keeps an ideal that he cannot realise, an ideal that is beyond his reach and capacity, he will be disappointed. He will give up his effort and become Tamasic.

You should have your own ideal. You may realise this ideal this moment or after ten years with faltering steps. It does not matter much. Every man should endeavour to live up to his ideal. He should put his whole energy, nerve-force and will in the realisation of his ideal. You can chalk out your own ideal yourself according to your own standard. If you are unable to do this, have your guide to select for you the ideal that is suited to your capacity and standard.

One man may say, "I will teach the village boys and give them free education. This is my ideal in life." Another may say, I will serve the sick and nurse them carefully. I will join a charitable institution and give my service till the end of my life. The service of sick persons is my ideal." A third man may say, "I will beg from door to door and start a feeding scheme for mendicants and Sannyasins. This is my ideal." A fourth man may say, "My ideal is Self-realisation. I will go to Gangotri and live in a cave and do sincere meditation. This is my ideal."

All are quite correct according to their individual capacity and standard. You must gradually bring up or change the ideal to realisation of Truth or Brahman. The highest ideal of man is Self-realisation. Service, worship and the rest eventually result in the realisation of the inner Self. The ideal to have ethical perfection is just below the ideal of Self-realisation, but it leads to Self-realisation.

One should not treat a man who has a low ideal with contempt. He may be a baby-soul who is just crawling now on the moral or spiritual path. Your duty is to help him in all possible manner in the realisation or accomplishment of his ideal. You should give him all encouragement in his sincere endeavour to live up to his own highest ideal.

It is highly deplorable to note that the vast majority of persons have no ideal at all. Even educated persons do not cherish any ideal. They lead an aimless life and are therefore drifted hither and thither like a piece of straw. They make no progress in life. Is this not a very sad plight? It is highly deplorable indeed. It is very difficult to get a human birth and yet people do not realise the importance of keeping an ideal and living up to it. The ideal of "eat, drink and be merry" is adopted by the epicureans, gluttons and rich people. This school of thought has countless followers and the number is increasing daily by leaps and bounds. This was the ideal of Virochana. This is the ideal of the demons and demoniacal people. This ideal will lead a man to the darkest regions of misery and sorrow.

Blessed is the man who keeps his ideal and struggles hard to live up to it, for he will soon attain God-realisation! Glory unto sincere, struggling souls!

9

Moderation: the Watchword in Yoga

Verily, Yoga is not possible for him, who eats too much, nor for him, who does not eat at all, nor for him who sleeps too much, nor for him who is always awake, O Arjuna!

Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain for him who is moderate in eating and recreation, who is moderate in exertion in actions, who is moderate in sleep and in wakefulness.

(VI-16 &17)

Moderation is an important virtue which has to be cultivated by a spiritual aspirant. Moderation is freedom from excess in anything. Moderation is really calmness of mind. Moderation is equanimity. Moderation is skill in Yoga. Without moderation, no success is possible in Yoga and in material pursuits also. All the past luminaries of the world had observed moderation.

You should be moderate in eating, drinking, sleeping, reading, laughing, copulation, talking and exercise. If you eat too much you will get too drowsy. Various diseases of the stomach, intestines and the liver will develop. All the internal organs will be overtaxed. Too much sleep will make you dull and Tamasic. Too much copulation will drain your energy and cause weakness, low vitality and diseases. Too much talking will disturb your peace of mind and cause exhaustion also.

Lord Buddha plunged into extreme austerities in the beginning of his spiritual practices. He gave up food entirely. He did too rigorous austerities. He suffered very much. His body became emaciated. He did not make much spiritual progress. Then he discontinued his severe austerities and adhered to the golden medium. He

began to take food in moderation. He regulated his spiritual practices. Only then did he attain illumination. He always taught his disciples to stick to the middle path only. He learnt his lessons from experience.

It becomes difficult for some to control the tongue. If the dishes are palatable, they go beyond the limits of moderation. They overload the stomach. College students who have plenty of money often go to a sweetmeat shop and consume sweetmeats for Rs. 5 at a time. They cannot get up till the stomach is completely filled. Complete filling of the stomach is unhygienic and unscientific. Half the stomach only should be filled with food, and a quarter with water. The remaining quarter should be left free for the expansion of gas. This is moderation in diet. You can check overloading of the stomach through complete fasting on Ekadasi days and by taking only milk and fruit occasionally.

Always get up from the table when there is still a little inclination to eat more. Giving up of salt for two or three days in a week will help you to reduce the quantity of food. Reduction of food will not kill you. On the contrary, it will keep you quite healthy. It will help you to attain longevity.

Some aspirants give up their food and try to live on *neem* leaves for forty days. This is foolish austerity. They fall sick, become weak and are not able to do any Sadhana. Do not spoil your health in the name of austerities. Do not go to extremes in anything.

Some students begin to study hard, forcing away sleep with strong tea and thus burning the midnight oil before appearing for the final examination. They lead a happy-go-lucky life for ten months before the examination. This is very bad. This is why they fall sick on account of undue strain during the period of the examination. Study should be well regulated. You should prepare your lessons thoroughly daily.

Some people make friendship with others quickly. They love intensely for some time and then break it quickly on account of some trivial causes. They are extreme in their manifestation of emotions. They either love intensely or hate intensely. The emotions also must be well controlled. Do not move too much with anybody. Be moderate in this direction also. You can then keep lasting friendship with everybody.

Be moderate in your expenses also. Regulate it. Some are imprudent. They thoughtlessly spend too much in one month and borrow in the next.

Be moderate in thinking. Kill all irrelevant, nonsensical, loose thoughts. Do not think too much. Entertain sublime, divine thoughts.

Be moderate in work. Do not overwork. Overwork is the cause of many diseases. If you overwork, you cannot pray and meditate.

Sadhana also must be well regulated. The period of meditation must be increased gradually. The period of Sirshasana should be increased with care. The reduction of sleep also should be gradual. When Sadhana is done by fits and starts there will be no spiritual progress.

The nervous system is extremely sensitive. It responds even to very slight changes and causes distraction of the mind. It is therefore very necessary that you should lead a well regulated and disciplined life and be moderate in everything.

Sleep and wake up at the prescribed time. Sleep at 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. and get up at 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. If you sleep too much you will be lethargic. The mind will become dull and the body heavy. You cannot meditate then. If you sleep too little you will experience drowsiness. You will sleep during meditation. Keep the golden medium. You will then have rapid progress in Yoga. You will attain success in Yoga, which will kill all sorts of pains and sorrows in this life itself.

He who is moderate in everything is a perfect Yogi. He enjoys happiness here and in the next world also. He moves about happily and is always cheerful. He keeps up perfect health and a high standard of vigour, vim and vitality. He attains longevity and fame. He attains spiritual and material success.

Therefore, stick to the golden or happy medium. Follow the middle path always. Give up extremes in everything and be happy for ever.

May moderation be your motto and ideal!

10

Purity of Food

The foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the Sattwic.

The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning are liked by the Rajasic, and are productive of pain, grief and disease.

That which is stale, tasteless, putrid and rotten, refuse and impure, is the food liked by the Tamasic.

(XVI1-8, 9 & 10)

A diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of Yoga and spiritual progress is called Yogic diet. Diet has an intimate connection with the mind. The mind is formed of the subtlest essence of food. Sage Uddalaka instructs his son Swetaketu: "Food, when consumed, becomes threefold-the gross particles become excrement, the middling ones flesh, and the fine ones the mind. My child, when curd is churned, its fine particles, which rise upwards, form butter. Thus, my child, when food is consumed, the fine particles, which rise upwards form the mind. Hence, the mind is verily food".

Diet is of three kinds-Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. Milk, barley, wheat, cereals, butter, cheese, tomatoes, almonds, dates, fruit, honey and sugar-candy are all Sattwic foodstuffs. They render the mind pure and calm.

Fish, eggs, meat, salt, chillies and asafoetida are Rajasic foodstuffs. They excite passion. Beef, wine, garlic, onions and tobacco are Tamasic foodstuffs. They fill the mind with anger darkness and inertia.

An aspirant should be very careful in the selection of articles of a Sattwic nature, especially in the beginning of

his Sadhana period. Later on, when perfection is attained, drastic dietetic restrictions can be removed.

Sour, hot, pungent and bitter preparations, salt, mustard, asafoetida, chillies, tamarind, sour curd, chutney, meat, eggs, fish, garlic, onions, alcoholic liquors, acidic things, stale food, over-ripe or unripe fruit and other articles that disagree with one's system should be avoided entirely.

Rajasic food distracts the mind. It excites passion. Give up salt. It excites passion and emotion. Giving up of salt helps in the control of the palate and thereby the mind. The willpower is also developed. Snake bite and scorpion sting will have no influence on a man who has given up salt. Onions and garlic are worse than meat.

Purity of food leads to purity of the mind. Sattwic food helps meditation. The discipline of food is very necessary for the successful practice of Yogic Sadhana. If the palate is controlled, then all the other senses are also controlled.

Food plays an important part in meditation. Different foods produce different effects on different compartments of the brain. For the practice of meditation the food should be light, nutritious and Sattwic. Milk, fruit, almonds, butter, sugarcandy, green gram, Bengal gram soaked in water overnight, and bread are all very helpful in meditation. *Thed*, a kind of root that is available in abundance in the Himalayan regions, is also very Sattwic. Tea and sugar should be taken in moderation. It is better if you can give them up entirely. Dried ginger powder can be mixed with milk and taken frequently. Indian Yogis like this very much. Another health-giving stuff is myrobalan of the yellow variety. It should be chewed now and then. In the *Ashtanga Hridaya* of Vagbhatacharya, it is represented as even superior to a nourishing mother. It takes care of the body better than a mother does. A mother gets annoyed with her child sometimes, but myrobalan always keeps an

even temperament and is cheerful and enthusiastic in attending to the well-being of human beings. It preserves semen and stops all nocturnal emissions. Potatoes boiled without salt, or baked, are also an excellent food for practitioners.

A beginner should be careful in choosing foodstuffs of a Sattwic nature. Food exercises a tremendous influence on the mind. You can see it so obviously in everyday life. It is very difficult to control the mind after a heavy, sumptuous, indigestible, rich meal. The mind runs, wanders and jumps about like an ape all the time. Alcohol causes great excitement of the mind.

The diet should be such as can maintain both physical efficiency and good health. The well-being of an individual depends more upon perfect nutrition than on anything else. Various sorts of intestinal diseases, increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, a lack of high vitality and power of resistance, rickets, scurvy, anaemia or poverty of the blood, and beri-beri are all due to faulty nutrition. It should be remembered that it is not so much the climate as food which plays the vital role in producing a strong, healthy body or a weakling suffering from a host of diseases. An appreciable knowledge of the science of dietetics is essential for everybody, especially for spiritual aspirants, to maintain physical efficiency and good health. Aspirants should be able to make up a cheap and well balanced meal from only certain articles of diet. What is needed is a well-balanced diet, not a rich one. A rich diet produces diseases of the liver, kidneys and pancreas. A well-balanced diet helps a man to grow and also to turn out more work. It increases his body-weight and keeps up efficiency, stamina and a high standard of vim and vigour.

You are what you eat. The diet should be fresh, simple, light, bland, wholesome, easily digestible and nutritious. All articles that are putrid, stale, decomposed, unclean, twice cooked or kept ovenight, should be abandoned.

Gluttons and epicureans cannot dream of getting success in Yoga. He who takes a moderate diet, who has regulated his diet, can become a Yogi, not others.

Man has invented so many kinds of dishes just to satisfy his palate, and has thus made life complex and miserable. He calls himself civilised when he is really ignorant and deluded by his senses. His mind gets upset when he cannot get his usual dishes in a new place. Is this real strength? He has become an absolute slave of his tongue. This is very deplorable. Be natural and simple in eating and drinking. Moderation is Yoga. Eat to live and do not live to eat. Follow this golden rule and be happy. You can then devote more time to Yogic practices.

The vast majority of people dig their graves with their teeth. No rest is given to the stomach. After all, man wants very little on this bountiful earth—a little bread, a little butter and some cold water. This will amply suffice to keep life going. On the contrary, people stuff their stomachs with all sorts of things, both edible and inedible, on account of the force of habit, even when there is no appetite. This is very bad. All diseases take their origin from overloading the stomach. Hunger is the best sauce. If there is hunger, food can be digested well. If you have no appetite, do not take anything. Let the stomach enjoy a full holiday!

A variety of dishes overworks the stomach, induces a capricious appetite and renders the palate fastidious. Then it becomes difficult to please the palate. Therefore, control the palate first, then all the other senses can be easily controlled.

Heavy food leads to a Tamasic state and induces sleep only. There is a general misapprehension that a large quantity of food is necessary for health and strength. Much depends upon the power of assimilation and absorption. Generally, in the vast majority of cases, most of the food passes away undigested along with the faeces. Take half a stomachful of wholesome food. Fill a

quarter with pure water and leave the rest free for the expansion of gas. This is moderation. Moderation plays a vital part in keeping up perfect health.

Almost all diseases are due to irregularity of meals, overeating and unwholesome food. Eating all things at all times like a monkey is highly dangerous. Such a man can become a Rogi or sick man easily; but he can never become a Yogi.

A glutton cannot at the very outset have diet regulations and observe moderation. He should try to be moderate gradually. First, let him take a lesser quantity twice as usual. Then, instead of the usual heavy night meal, let him take fruit and milk alone for a number of days. In due course he can completely avoid the night meal and try to take fruit and milk during the daytime. Those who do intense Sadhana must take milk alone. It is a perfect food by itself. If necessary they can take some easily digestible fruit. If a glutton takes to a fruit or milk diet all of a sudden, every moment he will desire to eat something or the other. This is not good. Once again I reiterate: gradual practice is necessary.

Evolution is better than revolution. You should not make sudden changes in anything, particularly in matters pertaining to food and drink. Let the change be slow and gradual. The system should accommodate it without any trouble. *Natura nonfacit saltum*—Nature never moves by leaps.

A vegetarian diet has been acclaimed to be the most conducive to spiritual and psychic advancement. It has been found that meat augments animal passion and decreases the intellectual capacity. While the people in meat-eating countries are physically active and strong, the same cannot be said of their spiritual attainments. Meat is not at all necessary for the maintenance of perfect health, vigour and vitality. On the contrary, it is highly deleterious to health. It brings in its train a host of ailments such as tapeworm, albuminuria and other

diseases of the kidneys. The killing of animals for food is a great sin. Instead of killing egoism and the idea of "I"-ness and "mine"-ness, ignorant people kill innocent animals under the pretext of making a sacrifice to the goddess. In reality it is meant to satisfy the palate only. What inhuman and horrible crimes are being committed in the name of God and religion! Ahimsa is the first virtue that a spiritual aspirant should try to possess. He should have reverence for life.

Lord Jesus says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy". Mahavira shouted in a trumpet-like voice: "Regard every living being as thyself and harm none". The law of Karma is inexorable, unrelenting and immutable. The pain you inflict upon another will surely rebound upon you, and the happiness you radiate will come back to you, adding to your own happiness. He who knows this law will not hurt anybody.

The eating of meat and alcoholism are closely allied. The craving for liquor dies a natural death if meat is withdrawn from one's diet. The question of birth-control becomes very difficult in the case of those who take meat. To them mindcontrol is next to impossible. Mark how the tiger, eating meat, and the cow or elephant, living on green grass, are poles apart! The one is wild and ferocious while the other is mild and peaceful.

The first and foremost step in the spiritual advancement of an aspirant is the giving up of meat. The Divine Light will not descend if the stomach is loaded with meat. In large meat-eating countries, the cancer mortality is extremely high. Vegetarians keep up sound health till old age. Even in the West, doctors in hospitals are putting their patients on a regimen of vegetable diet. The patients convalesce quickly. It is a welcome sign to see that at least in some of the countries of Europe, vegetarian hotels are springing up in amazing numbers, and it is not too much to expect that in the course of a decade or two the Westerners will become quite a

different race of people altogether in their food, dress, manners, habits and social customs.

Aspirants should avoid narcotics like coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco. They stimulate the senses. Our senses are compared to restive horses and they become uncontrollable when we take narcotics. You should control the senses by refraining from taking narcotics. We are all slaves of our senses more or less, and the senses in turn are the slaves of the narcotics. If you really crave for perfection, control of mind and success in Yoga, avoid these narcotics by all possible means.

Manu, Jesus and Buddha exhorted the people to refrain from using liquors, intoxicants and drugs as these are deleterious in their effects. No spiritual progress is possible without abandoning them.

Boil half a litre of milk along with some boiled rice, ghee and sugar. This is called *cheru*. It is an excellent food for Yogis. This is for daytime. For the evening meal, half a litre of milk will do.

Milk is the best food for Yogis but even a small quantity is harmful to some and may not agree with all constitutions. If one form of diet is not suitable, or if you feel constipated, change the diet and try some other Sattwic articles. This is common sense.

Milk should not be boiled too much. It should be removed from the fire as soon as the boiling point is reached. Too much boiling destroys the nutritive principles and vitamins and renders the milk quite useless.

A fruit diet exercises a benign influence on the constitution. This is a natural form of diet. Fruit are very great energy producers. A fruit and milk diet helps concentration and easy mental focussing. Barley, wheat, milk and *ghee* all promote longevity and increase one's power and strength. Fruit juice and the water wherein sugar-candy is dissolved are very good beverages. Butter

mixed with sugar-candy, and almonds soaked in water, can be taken. These cool the system.

Do not fast too often. This might produce weakness. Occasional fasting once a month, or when passion troubles you much, will suffice. During the fast you should not even think of the various articles of food. Constant thought of food during the fast cannot bring you the desired results. During the fast avoid company. Live alone. Utilise your time in Yogic Sadhana. After a fast do not take any heavy food. Milk or some fruit juice is beneficial.

Do not make much fuss about your diet. You need not advertise to everyone if you are able to pull on with a particular form of diet. The observance of such restraints is for your advancement on the spiritual path and you will not be spiritually benefited by giving publicity to your form of Sadhana.

There are many today who make it a profession to earn money and a livelihood by performing some Asanas and Pranayama, or by having some diet regulation, such as eating only raw articles or leaves or roots. Such people cannot have any real spiritual growth. The goal of life is Self-realisation. Aspirants should keep the goal always in view and do intense Sadhana by the prescribed methods.

Live a natural, simple life. Take simple food that is wholly agreeable to your system. You should have your own menu to suit your constitution. You are yourself the best judge to select a Sattwic diet. In the matter of food and drink, you will do well to eat and drink as a master. You should not have the least craving for any particular diet. You should not become a slave of this food or that food. A simple, natural, nonstimulating, tissue-building, energy-producing diet, free from alcohol, will keep the mind calm and pure and help you in your Yoga practices and in the attainment of the goal of life, namely, God-realisation.

11

Seclusion is a 'Must' in Sadhana

Unswerving devotion unto me by the Yoga of nonseparation, resort to solitary places, distaste for the society of men.

(XIII-10)

Ekanath lived in the world with his wife and children, practised devotional Yoga and attained Sayujya. Raja Janaka ruled over the kingdom of Mithila and attained Jnana amidst royal activities. Swami Vidyaranya, the author of the reputed *Panchadasi* was the Dewan of Vijayanagaram. He worked as Dewan of the State, practised meditation and realised by remaining in the world. Sri Tilak and Sri Aurobindo have strongly preached this doctrine. The obstacles to Yoga are not from outside but from within. If you have succeeded in perfect Pratyahara, you can remain wherever you like. This is all doubtlessly true, but just hear the other part of the story. Do not be one-sided. Look to the other side of the shield.

This is plausible, sounds all right, but not feasible in the vast majority. It is easier said than done. Sri Aurobindo preaches realisation amidst activity, but has shut himself in a closed room for the last twenty years. How many Janakas, Ekanaths, Vidyaranyas you have had? These people were really Yoga-Bhrashtas. That is the reason why they were able to practise meditation in the world. It is absolutely impossible for the vast majority. To serve God and mammon at the same time is extremely difficult. The mind can take up only one thing at a time. Swami Rama Tirtha was a recluse in Brahmapuri for two years. Lord Jesus also was missing for eighteen years. Lord Buddha went into seclusion for

six or eight years in the Urvula forest, the modern Buddha Gaya. Many had taken to seclusion during their Sadhana period. Gautama Rishi writes in his *Nyaya Sutras* that mountain caves, sand-beds, the river side and mountain-side are all very favourable places for meditation. You can make a beginning in the world, but when you have advanced, you must shift to a suitable place with mountain scenery, or at the seaside, or places along the banks of beautiful rivers like the Narmada or the Ganges. Such beautiful places exert a benign, elevating influence.

Remember that the place must be of a temperate climate and must suit you during summer, during the rainy season and in winter. You must stick to one place for three years with firm determination. As all places combine some advantages with some disadvantages, you will have to select that place which has more advantages and less disadvantages.

Everything is relative in this world. You can hardly get a place that can satisfy you from all viewpoints. It is an impossibility. You should not change when you encounter some inconvenience. You should put up with it. There is no use in wandering frequently. Do not compare one place with another. Maya will tempt you in various ways. Use your discrimination and reason. Mussoorie may appear to you most charming when you are at Simla. Simla may appear more delightful when you are at Mussoorie. Do not believe the mind and the senses any longer. Enough, enough of their tricks! No more, no more of their wiles! Be on the watch to guard yourself against sense-deceptions and temptations.

In the world the environments are quite unfavourable. They excite, ignite and kindle the nerves, the hidden past impressions, desires and the senses. For some months you may remain secluded in a room and progress quite well with good concentration and meditation. All of a sudden some disturbance or the other comes and upsets your meditation. Your friends

are your real enemies in a way. They drag you for some business or the other into the world. You are drawn forcibly through moral sentiments. It is irresistible. It is, of course, inevitable. You should see this as a form of weakness on your part. To sacrifice your ideal for the sake of pleasing some of your intimate friends is really far from commendable. By your mixing with these worldlings, your new spiritual impressions will get obliterated or effaced and you will find it extremely difficult to regain your original state despite redoubled effort.

Mixing with worldly-minded persons is highly disastrous to an aspirant. The two currents are diametrically opposite. A worldly minded man and a spiritual aspirant move in diametrically opposite directions. A worldly man is very fond of talking. He is garrulous. He suffers from lingual diarrhoea. Gossip, idle talk, long talk, big talk, tall talk-all these afford him the greatest pleasure. The aspirant, on the other hand, is a man of few words, to the point, and that also on spiritual matters. Worldly topics do not interest him at all. They give him acute pain. The mode of thought also differs in the two cases. In the instance of a worldly man, his thought hovers around his wife, children and the way to amass wealth and get sensual pleasure. His thinking is shallow. An aspirant has sublime thoughts about God. A worldly man always does an action with a selfish motive. An aspirant does it unselfishly with a strong feeling that the whole world is nothing but his own Self. If a worldly man has Rs. 100 with-him, he always thinks of saving for the future. An aspirant will spend the amount the same day. He is a man of simplicity.

A worldly man wants company but an aspirant should court solitude. He should remain alone. This is very, very important. I have to emphatically assert again that solitude is a *sine qua non.* I have to impress upon your mind that it is a great desideratum.

If you have once tasted properly and to the very depth the happiness of solitude, you will never leave it at

any cost. It is only those who have a preponderance of restless impressions that flutter about from Brindavan to Varanasi, from Varanasi to Jagannath, like a wild butterfly.

Quiet, solitary places like Swarag Ashram, Rishikesh and Uttarkasi have a beautiful charm of their own. This is indescribable. It has to be felt and understood by the subtle discriminative intellect. A gross, worldly, practical intellect can never discriminate and understand the beauty and peace of such remarkable places, the supreme abode of Rishis and sages. The spiritual vibrations that are present in these places can by themselves take a man to Samadhi without much effort. The Himalayan vibrations and the soothing and soul-elevating influence of the holy Ganges can turn an inveterate atheist and materialist into a staunch spiritualist. Live for three months in these holy places and realise for yourself the charm, grandeur and benign influence of solitude.

Back to the point. In the world there are minds in various stages of growth. There are people of diverse mentality. There is a multiplicity of minds. There are two sets of currents-the currents of attraction and repulsion-in the mind. When you mix with people of a different mentality, you are naturally attracted towards some and also repelled by others. Secondly, there is the current of jealousy also. When you see other persons who are in possession of higher virtues and assets, you are naturally affected during your early stages of spiritual practice. These hostile currents are unfavourable, so meditation suffers.

Further, when you mix, you have to talk much. You are forced to talk a lot. This means wastage of energy. All energies must be very carefully conserved by an aspirant. All the doors through which energy leaks out should be rigidly shut through complete Pratyahara, through total abstraction. Thirdly, if you do not know how to protect yourself, the Prana sheath, your valuable Prana, will pass away to other persons. Your magnetic

aura, your mental aura and your Pranic aura will flow to other weak persons. This is termed as vampirism. There will be considerable loss of prana. You must therefore know the process of protecting yourself by developing an auric shell.

A young mango nursery has to be fenced properly in the beginning. A small fire started by the collection of a few dried leaves or bits of straw can be doubtlessly extinguished if you suddenly introduce a big log of wood in the fire. You are like the mango nursery, like the small fire, during the period of Sadhana. How can you withstand the hostile currents of the world? What you have gained in five years through hard practice will be irrecoverably lost in a month by promiscuous mixing with worldlings. Several persons have complained to me that they have lost the power of concentration by mixing and they cannot attain the same state that they had during seclusion.

You should not enter the world before five or six years of seclusion. You must test how you fare when you enter the world. If you are not a bit affected, if you can keep up constant balance of mind, if you can rest in the Atman, you can move about in the world. Otherwise, wait for some time more in seclusion and continue Sadhana.

There is no harm in your mixing with a congenial person who is also devoted to meditation, study and other spiritual pursuits, for one hour daily, and in whose company you experience pleasure and elevation of thought. You can discuss various abstruse philosophical points. You will find this useful. You can be in the company of higher, spiritual personages who enter into Samadhi. Their company will be highly beneficial. Instinct will speak aloud from within that such and such company is elevating and such and such company is depressing. If you find that the company of a certain person gives the least depression, shun him from that very moment.

I know of several persons who have had a terrible downfall from their spiritual heights owing to

indiscriminate and promiscuous mixing. They entered the world hastily, without testing themselves. They were reduced to a level worse than that of a worldly man. The old, evil impressions wait for an opportunity of crushing you down. All the old desires return and attack you with tremendous force. The cravings become intensified during the period of downfall. The aspirant finds it difficult to rise again.

Everything should be done gradually. It is very difficult for a man who has been in the world to shut himself completely in a room and observe silence also. It will be very painful and troublesome for a beginner. He should slowly train himself. He should train the mind gradually by observing silence once a week and remaining in the room for a certain number of hours. He should have a walk in the evening along the banks of a river or along the seaside or any other suitable place.

For a Sadhu, fresh air, invigorating cold baths, an evening stroll and moderate exercise are very essential. He cannot afford to have milk and *ghee* and has to depend upon help from Nature in a variety of ways. All throughout the period of Sadhana, strong common sense should be exercised. After a period of about two or three years he will be able to remain alone in a closed room all throughout the day, because he now knows the process of reflection and meditation. He can spend six hours in meditation and six hours in study. The mind will now be completely adjusted to the new life. There will be no trouble. He will be highly delighted to remain alone always. He would not like to be disturbed even for a day. He would not want to lose the peace and bliss of solitude. He depends upon the Atman within for help, strength and happiness and not on the world outside. He has now a changed angle of vision and becomes a changed being. He has a changed psychology. Worldly-minded persons cannot properly comprehend his metamorphosed nature.

12
The Mystery of Death

Just as a man casts off worn-out clothes and puts on new ones, so also the embodied Self casts off worn-out bodies and enters others which are new.

(II-22)

The innate question in all is: what remains after death? What becomes to the soul after the death of the body? Where is the soul gone to? Does it still exist? All these questions arise spontaneously in all minds. These are momentous questions which touch the hearts of all deeply. The same questions arise today in all people and in all countries as they arose thousands of years ago. No one can stop them. These questions are discussed today and they will be discussed in the future also. From ancient times, philosophers, sages, saints, Yogis, thinkers, Swamis, prophets and-metaphysicians have tried their best to solve the great problem of death.

When you lead a life of luxury, when you are rolling in wealth, you forget about the phenomenon of death. But the moment you see one of your dearest relations snatched away by the cruel hand of death, you are at once struck with awe and wonder and reflect within yourself as to where this soul has departed to. Does the soul still exist? Is there a soul Independent of the body? It cannot be totally annihilated. The past impressions and thoughts of the soul cannot die.

You can overcome pain and sorrow if you know the true meaning of sorrow, pain, suffering and death. The phenomenon of death sets the human mind thinking deeply. All philosophy originates from the phenomenon of death. Thus philosophy is really a study of death. The highest philosophy of India starts with the subject of the

problem of death. Study the *Gita*, the *Kathopanishad* and also the *Chhandogya Upanishad* which treat of it. Death is a call to reflect and to seek the goal of Truth, the eternal Brahman.

According to Hinduism life is one continuous, neverending process. All change is only a change of environment and embodiment. The soul is immortal. It takes one form after another on account of its own actions. Hinduism is based on two fundamental doctrines, namely, the law of Karma and the law of transmigration. Death is only a necessary and a passing phenomenon. Just as you move from one house into another, so also the soul passes from one body to another to gain experience.

Death is nothing but a change of body. Death is the separation of the soul from the physical body. Just as a man casting off worn-out garments puts on new ones, so also the dweller in this body, casting off worn-out bodies, enters into others which are new.

Every soul is a circle. The circumference of this circle is nowhere but its centre is in the body. Death means a change of this centre from one body to another. Why then should you be afraid of death?

This physical body is composed of the five fundamental elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether. The gods are endowed with a divine and luminous body. The fire element is predominant in them. In man the earth element preponderates. In the case of aquatic animals, the element of water predominates. In the case of birds the element of air predominates.

The hardness of the body is due to a portion of the earth; the fluidity is due to a portion of water; the warmth that you feel in the body is due to fire; moving to and fro and such other activities are due to air; space is due to ether. The individual soul is different from the five elements.

The soul is the eternal Spirit. It is non-material. It is intelligence or consciousness.

The individual soul or Jivatma is an image or reflection of the Supreme Soul or Paramatma. Just as the sun is reflected in different parts of water, so also the Supreme Soul is reflected in the different minds of different persons.

The individual soul is reflected consciousness. It is this individual soul that departs from the body after the death of the body and goes to heaven with the senses, mind, Prana, past impressions, desires and tendencies. It is endowed with a subtle body when it proceeds to heaven.

Just as there is the subtle bladder within a football, so also, within the gross physical body there is another body-the subtle body or Linga Sarira. This subtle body comes out with all its impressions and tendencies at the time of death of the gross physical body. It is like vapour. It cannot be seen by the physical eye. It is the subtle body that goes to heaven. It manifests again in a gross form. This re-manifestation of the subtle form into the gross physical form is called reincarnation. You may deny this law but it exists. It is inexorable and unrelenting. If you deny the law, it clearly shows that you are ignorant of it; it will surely operate whether you admit it or not. The light of the sun is there whether the owl accepts it or not.

A dead body cannot talk, walk or see. It remains like a log of wood after the soul has departed from it. It is the soul that enlivens moves and directs the body, mind and senses.

The soul, accompanied by the chief vital air (Mukhya Prana), the sense-organs and the mind, and taking with itself ignorance, good and evil actions and the impressions left by its previous existences, leaves its former body and obtains a new one.

When the soul passes from one body to another, it is enveloped by the subtle parts of the elements which are

the seeds of the new body. The soul has a vision of the body to come. Just as a leech or a caterpillar takes hold of another object before it leaves its hold of the first one, so also the soul visualises the body to come before it leaves the present one.

Just as a leech supported on a straw goes to the end of it and then takes hold of another support by contracting itself, so does the self throw its body aside and, making it senseless, takes hold of another support after contracting itself. Just as a goldsmith takes apart a little quantity of gold and fashions a newer and better form, so does the self throw off this body and, making it senseless, takes on another, a newer and better form, for its enjoyment in the world of the manes, celestials, gods or Hiranyagarbha.

The Jiva has adopted the whole universe as its means to the realisation of the fruit of its actions. It goes from one body to another to fulfil this object. Therefore, the whole universe, impelled by the work of the jiva, waits for it with the requisite means for the realisation of the fruit of its work made ready. The *Satapatha Brahmana* says: "A man is born into the body that has been made for him."

When the king of a country pays a visit to some place within his kingdom, the leaders of the particular village, anticipating his arrival, wait on him with a variety of food and drink and provide him with beautiful mansions. They say, "Here he comes, here he comes." Similarly the elements and the presiding Deities like Indra and the rest, who help the organs of the body to function, wait upon the departing self with the means of enjoying the fruit of its works. They secure for the soul a suitable body to enjoy the fruit of its actions.

Desire is the root-cause of transmigration. Being a slave of desires, the individual soul attains those results to which its subtle body or mind is attached. Exhausting in heaven the fruit of whatever actions it did in its life it

returns from that world to this for fresh work. Thus does the man transmigrate who is a slave of desires. But the man who does not desire never transmigrates. He who is free from desire, the objects of whose desires have been attained, and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self—in his case, the organs do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman.

13

A Dying Man's Thoughts

And whosoever, leaving the body, goes forth remembering Me alone at the time of death, he attains My Being: there is no doubt about this.

Whosoever at the end leaves the body, thinking upon any being, to that being only he goes, O Kaunteya, because of his constant thought of that being!

(VIII-5 & 6)

Only the most prominent thought of one's life occupies the mind of a person at the time of death. The predominant thought at the time of death is what in normal life had occupied the person's attention most.

The last thought of a licentious man will be the thought of his woman. The last thought of an inveterate drunkard will be that of his peg of liquor. The last thought of a greedy moneylender will be that of his money. The last thought of a fighting soldier will be that of killing his enemy. The last thought of a mother who has been intensely attached to her only son will be that of her son only.

I once saw a dying man who had been having the habit of using snuff. When he was in an unconscious state, he used to move his fingers towards the nose very often and do imaginary sniffing. Obviously he was having the thought of snuff in his last moments. A medical officer of a hospital used all sorts of abusive and obscene terms when he was in a dying condition.

The last and most powerful thought that occupies the mind of a man in his dying moment determines the nature of his next birth. The last thought determines the nature or character of the body to be attained next. The

last thought of a man governs his future destiny. As a man thinketh, so shall he become.

If the thought of tea comes into your mind at the moment of death, you may become the manager of a tea estate in your next birth, provided you had done virtuous actions. You may be born as a labourer in the tea estate if you had not done any meritorious actions.

Desire is endless. Therefore, man cannot gratify all his desires in just one birth. At the time of death, the whole storehouse of impressions and desires is churned and the strongest and most cherished desire comes to the surface of the mind or the field of mental consciousness. Thus the churned-up cream of cherished desires arrests the attention of the dying man for immediate gratification. He thinks of that only at the time of death. Just as the most vital mango plant shoots up prominently in the nursery, so also the strongest desire shoots up to the surface of the mind. If the desire is not gratified, the mind gets saturated with that desire and it is gratified in his next birth. This desire will become very prominent in his next birth.

King Bharata, the son of Rishaba, renounced his kingdom and took to the life of an ascetic. One day he observed a small motherless deer in distress. He took pity on the poor creature and loved it so passionately that his thoughts were mainly centred on it, with the result that he completely forgot about God. At the time of his death the thought of the little deer harassed him much and he had to take the birth of a deer in his subsequent incarnation.

King Bharata had been well versed in all the scriptures, in the *Vedas* and in the Puranas. He had performed very rigorous austerities and had meditated on the Lotus Feet of the glorious Vasudeva. But the inordinate attachment to the animal gave him the birth of a deer. Bharata recognised his folly during his life as a deer and remembered every detail of his past life as King

Bharata. As a deer he ever meditated on the Lord, ate but little and never mixed with the other deer. He was actually counting the number of his days on earth to get freedom from the low birth.

After departing from its body, the deer again took birth, this time as a Brahmin by the name Jada Bharata. Now Jada Bharata grew wise enough not to commit the same mistake once again, and from his very boyhood kept himself aloof. He had a mind free from attraction and repulsion. Thus, he escaped the clutches of Maya and, at the dissolution of his mortal sheath, attained oneness with Brahman.

I shall tell you another story.

Ajamila lost his pious conduct and led a detestable life. He fell into the evil depths of sinful habits and resorted to theft and robbery. He became the slave of a public woman. He had ten children, the last of whom was called Narayana.

When Ajamila was about to die, he was absorbed in the thought of his last son, whom he loved dearly. Three fearful messengers of the God of Death advanced towards him. In great distress, Ajamila cried out aloud for his son Narayana. On the mere mention of the name of Narayana, the attendants of Lord Narayana came speedily along and obstructed the messengers of death. They took Ajamila to the abode of Lord Narayana.

Ordinarily, a dying man is haunted by various horrible thoughts. He cannot concentrate his mind on God. His mind will be clouded by innumerable thoughts. He will be thinking: "Who will look after my young wife and children if I die? What will become of my property? Who will realise the outstanding dues from the debtors? I have not finished such and such work. The second son is not married. The work is half finished; many law-suits are pending judgment." Thus reviewing the actions of his whole life and thinking of the future, he will feel miserable.

It is very difficult to keep up God-consciousness at the time of death when diseases torment the body, when the consciousness begins to fade. Some people think: "Why should a man become a Sadhu and spend his life in the Himalayas? What is wanted is that one should think of God at the time of death. This can be done even at home." This is a mistake. The last thought will be that of God only in the case of the man who has disciplined his mind all throughout his life and has tried to fix his mind on the Lord through constant practice. This last thought of God cannot come through stray practice of a day or two. It cannot come in a week or a month. It is a lifelong endeavour and struggle.

The thought of God comes to a man at the time of death only through the Grace of the Lord. You have to keep up the practice of remembrance through repetition of the Divine Name. This has to be carried on every hour, every second, for days and months. When a strong habit is formed by means of unceasing practice through the period of one's life then it will be easy for one to remember God at the time of death.

Pursuing worldly activities throughout the day and sleeping at night, you will find no time to think of God at all. Even if you do Japa and prayer for ten or fifteen minutes daily but spend the rest of the time in worldly activities, you cannot make very great spiritual advancement. Therefore, the remembrance of God should be constant so that the thought of Him may come automatically at the time of death as well.

A devotee says to the Lord, "O Lord, let me enter the cool shade of your Lotus Feet this very day, when my senses are strong, when my memory is good! When the intellect is perturbed and perverted at the time of death, it may be carried away by the threefold diseases of the body." Even the most devout aspirant may fail to think of the Lord at the time of death due to the weakness of the physical body.

That is the reason why the *Gita, Bhagavata, Vishnu Sahasranaman* and other holy scriptures are recited at the deathbed of a sick person. Even though he may not be able to speak, he may hear what is read out to him. This will help him to forget the body and his ailment and enable him to think of God. Man always desires to die a peaceful death, with his mind fixed on God. When his memory fails, these sacred sentences of the scriptures will remind him of his real nature.

If holy books are read and his interest in the glory of God is aroused, there will be every possibility of the dying man forgetting his worldly attachments. The relatives gathered around him should not begin to weep. If they do so, his mind will be afflicted all the more. On the other hand, they should encourage him to think of God alone. When the mind of the sick person is thus gradually turned away from the network of worldly matters and centred on the picture of the Lord or on His glories and teachings, all favourable conditions are thereby created for the passing of his life-breath. The mind also peacefully alights on the thought of God.

The dying man will then repent for his follies and pray to God sincerely. Sincere prayers can undo the evil effects of bad Karmas. Discrimination and dispassion will dawn in him instantly. If real discrimination and dispassion dawn in him at the time of death, it will be enough to give him the solace which the soul strives for.

May you all realise God in this very birth by constant remembrance of Him! May He appear before you at the time of your departure from this body!

14
Spiritual Evolution

But the Yogi who strives with assiduity, purified from sins and perfected through many births, reaches the highest goal.

(VI-45)

Man can hardly attain perfection in one life. He has to develop his heart, intellect and hand. He has to mould his character in a perfect manner. He has to develop various virtuous qualities such as mercy, tolerance, love, forgiveness, equal vision and courage. He has to learn many lessons and gain experiences in this great world-school. Therefore, he has to take many lives. Reincarnation is quite true. One small life is a part of a long series that stretches behind you and in front of you. This short span is quite insignificant. One gains a little experience only. He evolves very little. During the course of one life, man does many evil actions. He does very few good actions. Very few die as good men.

Christians believe that one life determines and settles everything. How could this be? How can the everlasting future of man be made to depend on one small insignificant life? If in this life he believes in Christ, he will get eternal peace in heaven; if he is an unbeliever in the present life, he will get eternal damnation. He will be thrown for ever in the lake of fire or into a horrible hell. Is this not the most irrational doctrine? Should he not get his chances for correction and improvement? The doctrine of reincarnation is quite rational. It gives ample chances for man's growth, rectification and gradual evolution.

The word "transmigration" means "passing from one life to another". The one great and fundamental tenet of

most schools of Indian philosophy, with the exception of the Charvaka or materialist school, is the firm belief in the immortality of the soul. The soul passes through a number of lives for attaining perfection. This is technically called "transmigration of souls".

Belief in metempsychosis or the transmigration of the soul dates from primeval times. It is as early as primitive man. One solution to the great mystery of death and a consoling thought about it is the indestructibility of the soul, and its existence after death in other forms. In India, the ancient Aryans found in it the solution to the age-long problem of human suffering, and developed it into a very distinct religious doctrine.

The purpose of transmigration is not reward or punishment but betterment and perfection. It prepares the human being for the ultimate realisation which frees him from the cycle of births and deaths. It is not possible to achieve perfection and absolute freedom without a plurality of lives.

Man develops tendencies and aptitudes in several births and becomes a genius in one birth. Lord Buddha gained experiences in several births, but he became a Buddha only in his last birth. In one birth only all the virtues cannot be developed, but one can cultivate them by means of gradual evolution.

The human body is only a vesture and a dwelling place for the immortal soul. The soul can certainly re-inhabit another dwelling place and put on another vesture in order to develop and realise better than before the divine plan and purpose for it. The creator has so planned it. The soul of a depraved and corrupted human being is given another training in another body. The evolution of all beings is for a better condition. Evolution to the higher life and not deterioration to the lower is generally the law and principle of Nature though there are exceptions to the general rule.

The soul, armed with the little virtue and divinity gained in the previous existence, enters another life to increase, improve and develop that original stock. There is now a much greater response of the body controlled by the soul. It responds to God, to goodness, truth, holiness and other attributes of God.

The enlightening influence of Yogis and sages and their life and teachings assert themselves more and more in the new life. The light of God is more sought after and gravitation towards Him becomes stronger and stronger. More and more the life gets fitted to see God and hear His voice.

The process of transmigration continues-we cannot say through how many lives—until the soul, purged of all its impurities and having acquired a true and full knowledge of the imperishable Self through the practice of Yoga, attains final emancipation and enjoys perfect, eternal bliss. It has now attained perfect union with the Supreme Self.

When knowledge of the Self is attained, there is no more transmigration. Mother Prakriti's work is now over. She unravels all the experiences of this world to the individual soul and takes it higher and higher through various bodies till it regains its essential divine nature, till it merges itself in the Supreme Self or Para Brahman.

Even the least effort in the direction of Yoga never goes in vain. You will realise thereby the fruit of even that little Yogic practice. If you have succeeded in the practice of the first three limbs of Yoga, namely, Yama, Niyama and Asana in this birth, you will begin your practice in the next birth from the fourth limb, namely, Pranayama.

The Vedantin who has acquired the first two means—Viveka and Vairagya—in this birth, will start his practice in the next from the third means, namely, Shad Sampat. Therefore, do not be discouraged even a bit if

you fail to attain final liberation in this birth. Even a little practice for a short period will give you more strength, peace, joy and knowledge.

15

The Saint of Tomorrow

Even if the most sinful worships me, with devotion to none else, he too should indeed be regarded as righteous, for he has rightly resolved.

(IX-30)

Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners, yet thou shalt verily cross all sins by the raft of knowledge.

(IV-36)

Thoughts of sin haunt the minds of some persons. One man always thinks: "I have committed a very heinous sin. I do not know what to do." Again and again this one idea or thought haunts his mind. This is an undesirable habit. Such people do not know how to divert their mind. They become a prey to these haunting thoughts.

Virtue and vice are relative terms. They are creations of the mind. Sin is nothing but a mistake committed by the soul during the course of its evolution. The repetition of God's Name, charity and fasting will destroy at once any amount of sins. Why are you afraid then? Even the worst sinner can attain salvation and become a holy of holies. What was the state of Valmiki, Jagai and Madhai in the beginning? What was the condition of Ajamila? Were they not rogues of the first order? Repeat Om or Ram and assert boldly: "I am pure now. I am holy now." *Nil desperandum.* Where is there room for despair? Do virtuous actions. Remember the Lord always. Be true to the inner witness, the Indweller of your heart.

Only an ignorant man says, "I am a great sinner." This is a serious mistake. Never for a moment think that you are a sinner. You are the holiest person. You are the

ever-pure Atman. Sin cannot touch you. You are above virtue and vice. Virtue and vice are mental creations only. Sins are mistakes only. An ignorant Jiva commits these mistakes during the course of its journey in this world on account of ignorance. Through mistakes it gains experiences and marches forward on the spiritual path. Every mistake is your best teacher. One has to evolve through sins and mistakes. They are inevitable.

Whenever thoughts of this kind worry you, think: "I am doing Japa of Om. This will burn all the old, sinful actions. This will purify me. I am performing austerities. I fast and give in charity. These are all great purifiers. I am becoming purer and purer. Nothing can affect me now. I am like the effulgent fire or the sun. I am becoming a holy person." Assert whenever negative thoughts of sin trouble you: "I am the ever-pure Atman, Om, Om, Om."

Sin is expiated through self-punishment such as fasting, Japa, penance, meditation and repentance with a contrite heart. Even a wicked man can have communion with God through repentance, prayer and meditation.

The confession of evil deeds is the beginning of good deeds. Be not ashamed to confess that you have been in the wrong. If you confess your evil actions, you will then possess more sense than you had before to see your error. If you confess your sins, you begin your joumey towards emancipation. He who is sorry for having done evil actions mends himself and improves quickly.

Repentance is a divine streamlet for sinners to wash off their sins. Repent with a contrite heart. God will forgive you.

If you commit a wrong action on a certain occasion, you should not do so again. There should be no wrong over wrong. You may claim forgiveness if you are resolute to do the evil action no more.

Once a woman was charged for adultery. The Pharisees wanted Jesus to pronounce the Mosaic verdict

of stoning her to death. Lord Jesus quietly said, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her." This powerful utterance of the Lord at once turned the gaze of each one present within himself. Who could be without sin? Introspection revealed their own defects. One by one the people hung their heads down and left the place.

"Where are they?" Jesus asked the woman after some time. Did no man condemn thee?"

"No, my Lord," she answered.

"Neither do I condemn thee. Go thy way and sin no more," said the Lord, summing up in this beautiful incident the very essence of his divine message.

Contrition, a change of heart, is the only condition for God's forgiveness of human sins. Confess your sins. Repent for them. Turn away from them. Do not repeat them. Pray. Do Japa. Meditate. Practise Pranayama. Perform expiatory acts. All your sins will then be washed away. You will shine with lustre and brilliance.

There is no such thing as eternal damnation or eternal hellfire for sinners. It cannot be. It is a theory that has long since been exploded. Eternal damnation is an ungodly doctrine. It has been a terror and a nightmare for ages. To make people desist from doing wicked actions, a terrifying description of hell was given.

God has not created man to become everlasting fuel to feed the flames of hell. This is certainly not the purpose of creation. If God be such, no one will pay homage to Him. Who then can be saved? How many spotless people are there in this world? Who is of such untainted character as to receive a direct passport to heaven?

Everybody has his secret sins. Very few are born saints. No person can be found on earth who shines with all the excellent qualities. No one is wise at all times and no one is a fool always. The sinner of today is the saint of tomorrow. Hate the sin but not the sinner.

A rogue is not an eternal rogue. A prostitute is not an eternal prostitute. Leave these people in the company of saints: they will be newly moulded and transmuted into saints with virtuous qualities. The transformation of Ratnakar into Valmiki is an epic example of this truth.

It is never too late to mend. There is great hope even for a cut-throat if he makes a strong determination and takes up spiritual practices. A good, resolute start in virtuous life will give you peace and happiness. Do it now. Leave off evil ways. Follow the path of goodness. Be pure in life. You will then attain God-realisation.

Steadily resist the promptings of your lower nature. Gradually it will lose its power over you. You will gain strength. The spirit may pull in one direction and the flesh in another. Be firm and courageous. Yield not to the flesh. Be strong. Be positive always. Feel and think: "I can do everything if I will. There is nothing that I cannot do." Never give up the hope of realising God.

Watch every action. Allow not any impure action to stain your body. When anything pricks your conscience, abandon it. Fight against the tempting power of self-gratification and self-aggrandisement. Overcome anger by love, falsehood by truth, lust by purity, greed by generosity and pride by humility.

Lose the sense of "I"-ness and "mine"-ness. Control the mind. Repeat the Name of the Lord. Purify every part of yourself.

The service of others brings on virtue; harming others is sin. Therefore, serve others. Purify your heart by means of selfless and humble service of the poor and the afflicted and make it a fit abode for God to dwell.

Every day is a fresh beginning. Forget your past mistakes and failures. Enter a new life of victory. March on and on. Exert. Purify. Approach the saints. Abandon all fear, anxiety and worry. Rest in your divine centre. Sing Om. Meditate on Om. Realise the Self.

16

The Play of the Gunas

Purity, passion and inertia—these three qualities, O Mightyarmed, born of Prakriti, bind fast in the body the embodied, the indestructible.

(XIV-5)

A clear understanding of the three Gunas and their operations is very necessary for a Karma Yogi. He who has Knowledge of the three Gunas can do his work in a better and more efficient manner.

Guna means "cord". The Gunas bind the soul with a triple bond. These Gunas are the actual substances or ingredients of which Prakriti is constituted. They make up the whole world evolved out of Prakriti. They are not conjoined in equal quantities but in varying proportions, one or the other being in excess.

The three Gunas are never separate. They support one another. They intermingle with one another. They are intimately related, as the flame, the oil and the wick of the lamp. They form the very substance of Prakriti. All objects are composed of the three Gunas. The Gunas act on one another. Then there is evolution or manifestation. Destruction is only non-manifestation.

Sattwa is equilibrium. When it prevails there is peace or tranquillity. Rajas is activity which is expressed as attraction and repulsion, likes and dislikes, love and hatred. Tamas is that binding force with a tendency to lethargy, sloth and foolish actions. It causes delusion or non-discrimination.

During the cosmic dissolution these three Gunas exist in a state of equilibrium. During the process of projection, a vibration arises and these three qualities

manifest in the physical universe. These three qualities bring bondage to the individual soul. Though Sattwa is a desirable quality, yet it also binds man. It is a golden fetter. Rajas is the source of attachment and thirst for life. It causes attachment to action. Tamas binds man to heedlessness, laziness and sleep.

The three qualities are inseparable. No one is absolutely Rajasic or Sattwic or Tamasic. Sometimes Sattwa prevails in a man. He is calm and serene. He sits quietly and entertains sublime, soul-elevating thoughts. He studies religious scriptures. He talks on divine topics. When Sattwa prevails, the other two qualities are overpowered for the time being. At other times, Rajas prevails. The man does actions. He moves about. He plans, schemes and speculates. He craves for power, wealth and activity. When Rajas prevails, Sattwa and Tamas are overpowered for the time being. Sometimes Tamas prevails. Then man becomes slothful. He feels lazy, indolent and lethargic. He is dull. He feels sleepy. When Tamas prevails, then Sattwa and Rajas are overpowered for the time being.

In some people Sattwa is predominant, in others Rajas is predominant, while in the third group Tamas rules the person. When the wisdom-light streameth forth from all the gates of the body, then it may be known that Sattwa is increasing. Greed, outgoing of energy, the undertaking of actions, restlessness and desire-these are born of the increase of Rajas. Darkness, stagnation, heedlessness and delusion-these qualities are born of the increase of inertia.

Intense Rajas takes a Sattwic turn sometimes. A man who is immersed very deeply in Rajas may take to the path of renunciation. He will, as is the law, be fed up with activities.

It is impossible to rise or jump to Sattwa all of a sudden when one is in the Tamasic state. One should convert Tamas into intense activity first. Just as the

wheel of an engine appears to remain stationary when it revolves rapidly, so also a Sattwic man appears to be calm through his self-restraint or self-control. A Sattwic man is the most active. He can turn out tremendous work within a short time. He has full concentration.

Prakriti or Nature only does all actions. It is the Gunas that operate. Owing to ignorance the body is mistaken for the Self. The egoism of man asserts itself at every moment and at every step. Just as the motion of the clouds is falsely attributed to the sun, so also the movements of the body and the senses are falsely attributed to the Self. The Self is always silent and the witness of all actions.

The mind and the five organs of knowledge-the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose-are formed out of the Sattwic portion of the rudiments of matter. The Pranas and the five organs of action-the tongue, hands, feet, genitals and anus-are formed out of the Rajasic portion of the rudiments of matter. This physical body is formed out of the Tamasic portion of the rudiments of matter.

The Atman is beyond the three Gunas. It is the witness of the three Gunas. One should increase one's Sattwa Guna by developing virtuous qualities, by doing charity, by practising austerities, by taking Sattwic food and by practising Japa and meditation. He should control the senses and study religious books. Then he should go beyond Sattwa Guna also by identifying himself with the Atman and practising reflection and contemplation.

When the dweller in the body has crossed these three qualities whence all bodies have been produced, he is liberated from birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow. He drinks the nectar of immortality.

17

The Technique of Karma Yoga

Endowed with wisdom, one casts off in this life both good deeds and evil deeds: therefore, devote thyself to Yoga: Yoga is skill in action.

(II-50)

The wise, possessed of knowledge, having abandoned the fruit of their actions, and freed from the fetters of birth, go to the place which is beyond all evil.

(II-51)

In this there is no loss of effort nor is there any harm. Even a little of this knowledge protects one from great fear.

(II-40)

Merit and demerit do not affect that Karma Yogi who has evenness or equanimity of mind, for he exults not over the good fruit of the one nor worries over the evil fruit of the other. He has equanimity of mind in success and failure. His mind is resting in God all the while. Works which are of a binding nature lose that nature when performed with a balanced mind. The Karma Yogi has no attachment to the sensual objects. He has purified his mind by means of constant selfless service. He has given up all idea of agency. He treats the body as an instrument of God given to Him for the fulfilment of His purpose. He attributes all activities to the divine actor within. He who is established in the Yoga of equanimity becomes an expert in the science of Karma Yoga.

You will have to eliminate even such subtle attachment as "may God be pleased". Work merely for God's sake. Then even acts like eating, walking, talking, breathing, sleeping and answering the calls of nature

become Yogic activities. Work will then become worship. This is the great secret. You will have to spiritualise all your actions. You will have to transmute them into Yoga through practice. Mere theorising will not do. Understand the secrets of Karma Yoga and work unselfishly. Become a true Karma Yogi and enjoy the infinite bliss of the Atman.

The Karma Yogi who possesses evenness of mind casts off the fruit of works. He escapes from good and bad births. Clinging to fruit only is the cause of rebirth. When all actions are performed for God's sake in fulfilment of His purpose, without desire for fruit, the Karma Yogi gets illumination. He shakes off the bondage of birth. He attains knowledge of Brahman and, through Brahma-jnana, liberation or Moksha.

Actions which are of a binding nature lose that nature when you perform them with equanimity through the help of pure reason, which has lost all attachment to sensual objects and which is resting in the Self. You will have to cultivate and develop this pure reason and equanimity of mind. God has given this marvellous machine of the human body to man for service of humanity, and thereby, for the attainment of an immortal life. If man uses this body for the satisfaction of petty desires and petty, selfish ends, he becomes an object of pity and condemnation. He is caught up in the wheel of births and deaths.

Rest the mind in the Self when you perform any action. He who has developed a pure, poised reason and who rests in the Self is aware that all actions are performed by the divine actor within. He is perfectly conscious that God really moves and operates this body~machine. This Yogi of equanimity understands completely the principles that govern all bodily actions. He performs actions for the sake of God in fulfilment of His purpose, without desire for fruit. He eventually attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace and bliss.

The path of Karma Yoga, which eventually leads to the attainment of the infinite bliss of the Self, cannot be futile. If a religious ceremony is left incomplete, it is a wastage as the performer cannot realise its fruit; but this is not so in the case of Karma Yoga, because every action brings about an immediate purification of the heart.

You do not lose anything in Karma Yoga. Even if you do a little service of the country, of society, of the poor and destitute, it has its own advantages and benefits. It purifies your heart and prepares the inner, fourfold mind for the reception of knowledge of Atman. The impressions of these good actions are indelibly imbedded in your subconscious mind. The force of such impressions will again propel you to do some good actions. Sympathy, love and the spirit of patriotism and service will be gradually developed. Nothing is lost when the candle burns.

In agriculture you may manure and plough the field. Your efforts may be rendered futile if there is no rain during the year. This is not the case with selfless service. There is no uncertainty here regarding the results of any effort. Further, there is not the least chance of getting any harm by practising this Karma Yoga. If the doctor is a little injudicious, and administers medicine in over-doses, some harm will result. This is not so with Karma Yoga. Even a little service, a little practice of Nishkama Karma Yoga in any form, will save you from the great fear of worldly existence with its pains and sorrows, of birth and death with its concomitant evils.

18

Action is Thy Duty

Thy right is to work only, but never with its fruit. Let not the fruit of action be thy motive. nor let thy attachment be to inaction.

(11-47)

Man generally plans to get the fruit of his actions before he commences any kind of work. The mind is so framed that it cannot think of any kind of work without remuneration or reward. This is due to Rajas.

The quality of Rajas creates selfishness and attachment. A selfish man has no large heart. He has no ideal. He is pettyminded. His mind is full of greed. He always calculates. He cannot do any service in a magnanimous manner. He will say, "I will get so much money. I must therefore put forth so much work only." He will weigh the work and money in a balance. He cannot do a little more work. He will be ever looking at the clock to stop the work. He is mercenary. He is hired for money. He is actuated by the hope of reward. He is greedy. Selfless service is unknown to him. He has no idea of God. He has no glimpse of the Truth. He cannot even imagine an expanded, selfless life. He has a narrow, circumscribed circle or groove. He dwells within this small groove. His love extends to his own body and to his wife and children only. That is all. Generosity is unknown to him.

Human nature is always like this. The mind is so framed that it cannot work without the expectation of fruit or anticipation of rewards for actions. If you smile when you meet your friend, you do expect a smile from him in return. If you give a cup of water to someone, you do expect something in return from him. If you greet your

friend in Mount Road, you do expect him to retum your greeting. This is the inborn nature of a worldly-minded man.

When discrimination dawns, when the mind is filled with more purity, this nature changes slowly. The spirit of selflessness begins to grow slowly. You have to train the mind to work disinterestedly. You have to tame the mind very cautiously. You have to discipline it with patience and perseverance. Worldly-minded people cannot understand the spirit of selfless service.

In the beginning, all your actions may be selfish. But if you work hard in the field of Karma Yoga for two years, five actions may be unselfish and ninety-five selfish. Scrutinise your motives, purify them and struggle hard. After some years of hard, incessant struggle, fifty actions will become unselfish. A good time will come when all your actions, hundred per cent, will be purely unselfish. You will become a perfect Karma Yogi like Raja Janaka. The time will not be very far if you keep the ideal before you daily and struggle hard to reach it, and if you are sincere and earnest in your purpose.

Do you expect anything from your small son if you do him some service? In a similar manner you have to work for others also without expecting anything. You have to expand your heart and think that this whole world is your own Self. In the beginning it may give you a little pain because you have never worked up to this time in this line of selfless and disinterested service. When you have tasted a bit of the biiss of Karma Yoga, you can never leave it. The force of Karma Yoga will induce you to work more and more, with greater zeal and enthusiasm. You will begin to feel that this whole world is a manifestation of God. You will gain immense inner strength and purity of heart. Your heart will be filled with sympathy, mercy and pure love. Your spirit of self-sacrifice will grow *ad infinitum.* Selfishness of all sorts will be annihilated. Those who work in the public

field for the welfare of the country and for suffering humanity can realise the truth of this statement.

Ignorant people say that one cannot work without any motive. It is a great pity that they have not understood the essence and truth of Karma Yoga. Their minds are saturated with all sorts of fantastic desires and selfishness and, as such, their minds are very impure and clouded. They cannot grasp the underlying truth of Karma Yoga. They judge others from their own standpoint. Selflessness is a thing unknown to them. Their minds and brains have been rendered callous and so they cannot vibrate properly to understand what a motiveless action is. Passionate householders cannot dream of doing any work without expecting some gain for themselves and their family.

When the thought of doing good becomes part and parcel of a man's very being, then he will not entertain the least motive. He will take immense delight in serving others, in doing good to others. There is a peculiar joy and bliss in the practice of vigorous Karma Yoga. The Karma Yogi gets inner spiritual strength and power by performing selfless and motiveless actions.

Selfless work elevates and brings freedom. Selfish work retards spiritual progress and fastens one more chain to your feet. If you find it difficult to work without any motive, have one strong motive for freedom when you work. This will not bind you. This will destroy all the other lower selfish motives and will eventually die by itself, just as the stick used in burning a dead body burns the dead body and is itself consumed in the end. The joy of a developed Karma Yogi is really unbounded. Words cannot adequately describe his exalted state and inward happiness.

Look at the stupendous and magnanimous work turned out by Lord Buddha, Sri Sankara and other Karma Yogis of yore. Their names are handed down from posterity to posterity. Their names are still remembered.

The whole world worships them with reverence. Can you attribute an iota of selfish motive to their actions? They lived for rendering service to others. They practised absolute self-abnegation.

God dispenses the fruit of actions according to the motive. If the motive is pure, you will get Divine Grace and purity of mind. If the motive is impure, if you expect fruit for your actions, you will have to return to this world to reap those fruit. You will have to take birth again. Again you will do virtuous and vicious actions through the force of attraction and repulsion. You will be entrapped in the never-ending wheel of births and deaths.

But you should not remain in a state of inertia also, thinking that you will not get the fruit of your work if you work selflessly. You must not say now, "What is the use of my work now? I cannot get any fruit. I will remain inactive." This is also undesirable. You will become dull and Tamasic. There will be mental inactivity.

A Nishkama Karma Yogi says, "Do all actions without the expectation of fruit. This will produce purity of the mind and heart. Then one will get knowledge of the Self. One will get liberation or eternal bliss and immortality." This is his doctrine. This is a very great reward for your actions. You cannot imagine the exalted condition of a man of pure mind. He has unbounded peace, strength and joy. He is very near God. He is dear to God. He will soon receive the Divine Light.

Work without any kind of motive and feel its effects, namely, purity and inner strength. Become a Nishkama Karma Yogi. Dedicate all your actions to God. What an expanded heart you will now have! Indescribable! Practise, feel and enjoy this wonderful state of everlasting peace and perennial bliss.

19

Evenness of Mind is Yoga

Perform action, O Dhananjaya, being steadfast in Yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure! Evenness of mind is called Yoga.

(II-48)

Worldly people are generally elated by success and depressed by failure. Elation and depression are attributes of the mind. If you want to become a real Karma Yogi in the right sense of the term, you will have to keep a balanced mind at all times, in all conditions, under all circumstances. This is no doubt very difficult, but you will have to discipline the mind through constant practice. You will have to do it anyhow. Then only will you have peace of mind and real, lasting happiness. He who keeps a balanced mind is a Jnani. Karma Yoga prepares the mind for the attainment of Jnana. That is the beauty of Karma Yoga. That is the secret and essence of Karma Yoga.

Many people get attached to the work. They like some kind of work and take interest in it. They dislike some other kind of work. They are unwilling to leave the work they like if conditions require it. They take undue responsibility on their shoulders and pine and labour under cares, worries and anxieties. This is not Yoga at all because there is attachment to the work owing to the quality of Rajas.

There must not be the least attachment to any kind of work. You must be ready to discontinue any work at any time. There may be a divine call upon you for certain work. You will have to take it up at once without any grumbling, whatever may be the nature of the work, whether you are willing or not. If there is a divine call,

you may start a world-wide movement. You will have to stop the undertaking also, if conditions and circumstances demand that you do so. This is Yoga. You must be prepared to stop it at any time if God wills. You should not care whether there is success or failure. Simply obey the divine call and act like a soldier on the battlefield. There will then be no attachment to the work. There is great joy in such Karma Yoga because there is no personal element present here.

Keep the reason rooted in the Self. Have a poised mind amidst the changes of the world. Work for the fulfilment of purposes divine. Do not expect any fruit. Do everything as an offering to the Lord, as worship of the Lord. Work for the welfare of the world in unison with the Divine Will. Allow the divine energy to work unhampered through your instruments. The moment your egoism enters, there will be an immediate impediment to the free flow of the divine energy. Make your senses perfect instruments for His Lila. Keep the body-flute hollow by emptying yourself of your egoism. Then the Flute* bearer of Brindavan will play freely through your body-flute. He will work through your instruments. Then you will feel the lightness of the work. You will feel that God works through you. You will be freed of all your responsibilities. You will be as free as a bird. You will feel that you are quite a changed being. Your egoism will try to re-enter. So be careful. Be on the alert.

By gradual practice and purification of the mind, you will become an expert in Karma Yoga. All your actions will be done perfectly and selflessly. All your actions will then culminate in Jnana or spiritual wisdom. This is the goal of Karma Yoga. This is the Yoga of equanimity.

20

Like Water on the Lotus Leaf

Therefore, do thou always, without attachment, perform action which should be done: for, by performing action without attachment, man reaches the Supreme.

(III-19)

Attachment to objects is universal. No one is free from attachment of one kind or the other. The Sanskrit word for attachment is "Aasakti". The term "Raga" also is used sometimes.

Attachment is the first child of Maya. Attachment is the most powerful weapon of Maya for binding the Jivas to the Samsaric wheel of birth and death. You will never come back into this world if you have no attachment for anything. This whole Lila of the Lord is kept up by the force of attachment. A sober man just tastes a small peg of champagne when he is in evil company and becomes an inveterate drunkard through attachment to liquor. A non-smoker just takes a whiff of *Goldflake* and becomes a terrible smoker in a short time through attachment.

The first attachment commences with this physical body. Then all the other attachments crop up. Now the relationship of father, mother, sister, brother and wife comes in. One may get attached to a place, person or object. Attachment is a kind of strong glue that affixes the mind to the object. There is in the mind a gummy substance which is like a mixture of castor oil, glue, gum arabic, mucilage of tragacanth, gluten paste, honey, glycerine, jack-fruit juice and all the other gummy substances of this world. This mind is glued, as it were, to the objects with this mixture. Therefore, the attachment is very strong.

Why does the mind get attached to objects or persons? Because it finds pleasure in objects or persons. Wherever there is pleasure, there is attachment. The mind is attached to wife, son, house or friend because it finds pleasure in these objects.

Man always thirsts for the possession of objects, wife and wealth. This possession of objects generates selfishness. Selfishness causes greater attachment. Wherever there is attachment, there you will find the feeling of 'I'-ness and "mine"-ness. The full misery now starts. The whole Mayaic circle begins to revolve. The man becomes a slave now. Strong iron chains are fastened to his hands, knees and legs. He entangles himself like the spider or the silkworm. This is his own self-created trouble through attachment.

Attachment is the root-cause of all human ills and sufferings. It is the product of ignorance. It is a modification of nescience or ignorance. The husband weeps at the death of his wife because he is attached to the physical body of his wife. The wife also weeps at the time of her husband's death, not because of pure love for him, but simply because now she will not get any sexual pleasure and other comforts which she had enjoyed when he was alive. Wherever there is strong attachment, there one will find infatuation and fear. Infatuation is a delusion. Infatuation and fear are the old-standing associates of attachment. The cause of fear is attachment to this body and property. Attachment and fear are inseparable. They are like fire and heat.

Attachment takes on various forms. One should always be on the alert to detect its subtle workings. It does not spare even Sannyasins who have practically renounced everything. They slowly get attached to their Ashrams and disciples. This attachment is much stronger than the attachment of worldly persons. This is more difficult to eradicate.

Thousands of widows from Bengal and Madras are now staying at Varanasi with the sole idea that they will get liberation if they die there. But their minds are ever fixed on their granddaughters and grandsons. They are attached to the huge heaps of cow-dung cakes which they have been accumulating in the backyards of their houses for kindling fire.

The mind tries its utmost to get attached to some form or the other. It can never remain without clinging to one form or another. It leaves one form and immediately clings to another. This is its nature. This is due to the quality of Rajas. If Rajas is eradicated all attachments will die by themselves. People are attached to paltry things, even to note-books, walking sticks, pictures and handkerchiefs. The friendship of several years comes to its termination if Mr Kishen Prasad, who is a friend of Mr Ram Narayan, loses a small book which he had borrowed from the latter. A fight ensues. There is a flow of hot words and abuses. They do not talk to and see each other from that moment.

Women fight over little things. All this results from attachment. Even Sannyasins get attached to their waterpots, sticks and small tumblers. Even at the time of death they entertain thoughts of petty articles. The mind is so framed that it sticks to the old ruts and grooves. It demands drastic and rigorous discipline and real Sadhana to get rid of all sorts of attachment. One has to struggle hard and practise keen enquiry. The mind needs constant training. If someone says, "That house is on fire," or "the horse is dead" you are not a bit affected. Why? Because there is neither attachment nor identification here. But if the person says, "The house of Mr Ram Narayan is on fire," or "the horse of Mr Ganga Shankar is dead," at once attachment plays its role if the above individuals are present and hear the statements. Why? Because they have identification with the house and horse. It is verily attachment that brings sorrow.

In South India a Nattukkottai Chetty's wife lost her little son. The boy accidentally rolled into a tank. The mother had very intense attachment for the boy. At once she jumped into the tank and got drowned. The husband also was very much attached to both his wife and son. He too therefore drowned himself immediately. Instances like these occur daily. Several people become very nervous and get a shock also when they lose their wife or son. They are unable to talk or walk. Such is the havoc wrought by attachment.

It is this very attachment that brings us again and again to this world. The seeds of attachment are ingrained in the subconscious mind. We have to obliterate or fry all these seeds in *toto* through right thinking, enquiry and knowledge of the Atman. We have to cut asunder all these illusory attachments with the sword of dispassion or non-attachment.

Non-attachment is dispassion or indifference to sensual enjoyments. It is a purely mental state. The binding link is really in the mind. "I"-ness and "mine"-ness are the two poisonous fangs of the mind-serpent. Extract these two fangs and the serpent-mind will be tamed. There can be no bondage then. It is the mind that creates the ideas of "I"-ness and "mine"-ness. It is the mind that links the Jiva with the body and creates body-idea and the man thinks that he is the body. It is the mind that causes attachment to wife, son and property. If the binding link in the mind is destroyed, you can remain wherever you like. You can roam about peacefully in any part of the world, unattached like water on the lotus leaf. Nothing can then bind you. The whole mischief is wrought by the mind. A man may rule a vast dominion and yet he can be unattached. Queen Chudalai and Raja Janaka had not the least attachment to their wealth and kingdoms. Janaka said, "Even if the whole of Mithila is burnt, nothing of mine will be burnt". Look at the exalted mental state of Janaka! He was resting in his own

essential divine nature. He had not a bit of attachment. The mental state of Chudalai also was the same as that of Janaka.

Work cannot bring misery but it is the attachment to it and identification with work that brings in all sorts of worries, troubles and unhappiness. Understand the secret of Karma Yoga and work without attachment and identification. You will soon attain God-consciousness. This is Jnana. This is the fire of wisdom which burns all the fruit of actions.

Never say, "My body, my son, my wife, my house." Attachment is the root-cause of all the miseries and troubles in this world. Discipline the mind carefully. The old habits will creep in. Destroy them to the very root. Lead a life of perfect non-attachment. This is the master-key to open the realms of Brahmic bliss. But work incessantly without attachment, without any identification. Then alone can you have real happiness. You will yourself feel that you are a different being now.

Karma Yoga elevates a man to sublime, magnanimous heights. One should work patiently. No meditation and Samadhi are possible without a preliminary training in Karma Yoga. To work without attachment is doubtless a difficult task. It is an uphill work. But it becomes easy and pleasant for a man of patience and determination. You will have to do it at any cost if you want the final beatitude and immortality. Everybody will do it, though not now, maybe after several hundreds of births. But the question is: why not now? Cut short the cycle and enjoy supreme bliss right now in this very second, in this very birth. This is wisdom.

You will have to train the mind daily in all dealings and actions. Do not get attached to your wife, children and property. The world is like a public inn. People are united for some time and separated after some time. Turn the mind towards God or the Atman and do daily Japa, meditation and study of holy scriptures. Study

books on Vedanta and Bhartrihari's *Vairagya Shatakam.* Develop intense internal dispassion by understanding the illusory nature of this world. Always remember the pains of this worldly existence. Place before the mind the glorious life in the Atman and the supreme bliss of spiritual life. Remember the saints, Yogins and Jnanis like Sri Sankara, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez and Jnanadev and their sublime teachings. Slowly the mind will be weaned from sensual objects. It can be gradually turned towards God-realisation. Have recourse to the company of saints and devotees.

Learn to discriminate between the Real and the unreal. Try to develop dispassion as much as you can. Have no intimate connection with anybody. Lead a life of non-attachment to this world. Live like the lotus leaf in water. Do not bother a bit when you lose petty things. Think always that the perishable objects of this world are worthless. Repeat mentally the formula, "All objects are perishable". Do enquiry into the nature of the Atman. Meditate daily. That man who has no attachment in this world is the happiest man. He is God Himself. His joy is indescribable. He should be adored.

21
Mind to God Hands to Work

Therefore, at all times remember Me only and fight. With mind and intellect fixed in Me, thou shalt doubtless come to Me alone.

(VIII-7)

Fix your mind at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Give the hands to work. Even when you work, work like the typist who types and talks to you, or like the lady who knits and talks at the same time. Let your mind be ever attached to the Lotus Feet of the Lord while your hands are at work. The mind of the girl who has the water-pot on her head is on the pot even though she talks and jests with her comrades while walking along the road. Through gradual practice you will be able to do two things at the same time. The manual work will become automatic, mechanical or instinctive. You will have two minds. A portion of your mind will be at work while another portion will be engaged in Japa and meditation on the Lord. Therefore, always repeat the Name of the Lord while at work also.

Ashtavadhanis do eight things at a time. They play cards, move the man in Chaturanga play, dictate some passages to a third man, talk to a fourth in order and continuation, and so on. This is a question of training of the mind. You also can train the mind to work with the hands and remember God at the same time. This is Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga combined.

Though the cow grazes in the pasture, being separated from the calf, her mind is always fixed on the calf only. Similarly, you should fix the mind on God when you do Japa, and give your hands to the work, which is worship of God only. Renounce all attachment. Be

balanced in success and failure, in gain and loss, in victory and defeat, in pleasure and pain. Train and discipline your mind cautiously. This is your master-key to open the doors of the realms of bliss. This is the secret of Karma Yoga. This is the secret of success in Yoga.

Here is another interesting illustration. The mind of a nurse is always on her own child though she fondles and caresses the child of her master for the time being. The mind of an immoral woman is always on her paramour though she is engaged in her household duties. Even so, fix the mind at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and give the hands to worldly activities. You can realise God even while remaining in the world if you adopt this method. You need not retire to the Himalayan caves or forests.

22

The Descent of God

Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, ruling over My own nature, I am born by My own Maya.

Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and rise of unrighteousness, then I manifest Myself!

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.

(IV-6, 7 & 8)

The Bhakta desires to see his Deity in human form. This is the cause of an Avatara, an Incarnation. This is the reason why the formless Brahman is forced to assume a human form to please His devotees. The cause of the descent of an Avatara is the shedding of tears by the sincere devotees.

There is descent of God for the ascent of man. Whenever there is a catastrophe in the world, whenever there is unrighteousness, God comes down to the earth-plane to establish Dharma. He takes on a human form when He comes down to the physical plane. He is then called an Avatara.

Avataras are of various kinds. There is the Purna Avatara, Amsa Avatara, Avesh Avatara and Lila Avatara of the Virat Purusha for the preservation of the universe. Lord Krishna was a Purna Avatara with sixteen rays. Lord Rama was an Avatara with fourteen rays. Sri Sankara was an Amsa Avatara.

God Almighty does send now and then His messengers to the world to disseminate devotion far and wide and to stir the people onto the spiritual path. Lord Gauranga, Kabir, Ramdas and Goswami Tulsidas were

all His sweet, sincere messengers. How kind, affectionate and merciful is God! O sceptics, materialists and atheists! when will you open your eyes and ears? Wake up! Do not delay even a second. The God of Death is opening his jaws to devour you. Run to the Lord with open arms, with all feeling. Take refuge in Him and say, "O Lord, have mercy!"

Some people say, "How can we take Krishna as the Lord or Bhagavan? He took birth and died. He was only a man." This is a false statement. This is the utterance of an ignorant child. Lord Krishna did not take birth like human beings and then die like them. He made His appearance and disappeared. He exists still. There are His Nitya Lilas in Go-Loka or the Celestial Brindavan. The body of Avataras is made of Suddha Sattwa. Avataras have divine bodies. Their bodies are not made up of human flesh.

Lord Krishna had only manifested Himself for a time to establish world solidarity. He then disappeared. He was Lord Hari Himself. There is no doubt of this. He had a body of consciousness. His body was not made of flesh. Have full trust in Him. He will deliver you from the rounds of births and deaths. Repeat His Divine Name, "Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya" and sing His Kirtan, "Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare, He Natha Narayana Vasudeva.

Some ignorant persons object: "How can the unborn God assume a human form? How can the ruler of the universe be limited to a perishable body? How can the Lord who stands as the witness assume a finite body?" These are all vain, worthless, illogical questions. The doctrine of Avatara-hood is perfectly rational, logical and tenable.

God is the inner witness, the inner Self of all beings. He is not an absentee landlord of this world. He is not just a supracosmic Deity. He pervades and permeates all the atoms and the whole universe. He is the Lord of the

breath, the mind and all the organs. In Him we live, move and have our very being.

Just as a tailor who makes coats for others can make a coat for himself also, in a similar manner God, who has created bodies for others, can create a body for Himself as well. There is no difficulty. He is omnipotent and omniscient. As He has control over Maya, He is fully conscious of His divine nature though He assumes a form. At the same time He is infinite and unconditioned.

Sometimes the king visits the jail and enters the cell of a prisoner to see how matters are getting on in the prison. He does this for the good of the prisoners only. He is quite independent and yet, out of his own free will, he himself enters the cell. Even so, an Avatara puts on a fleshy body out of His own free will for the ascent of man. He is quite independent and has absolute control over Maya, like the king. The Jiva, on the other hand, is a slave of ignorance as long as he has no Self-realisation.

A simple Jivanmukta is like a star that glitters at night. He throws a little light only. Somehow or other he has crossed to the other shore through some austerity and Sadhana. He cannot elevate a large number of people. Just as the waters of a small spring in the field can quench the thirst of a few pilgrims only, so also this Kevala Jnani can bring peace to a few persons only. But the Avatara is a mighty person. He is like the large Mansarovar lake. He removes the veil of ignorance of thousands of men and women and takes them to the land of eternal rest, bliss and sunshine.

There are some premonitory signs that indicate the advent of an Avatara. The ground is well prepared for His descent. People take interest in Sankirtan and pious people disseminate Sankirtan Bhakti far and wide. Other great souls are born beforehand and these train people in selfless service and right conduct.

There is a grand possibility of the descent of God in human form as an Avatara. This has occurred several

times in the past and will continue to occur in the future as well. In the divine scheme of things, Avataras are indispensably required for the uplift of humanity.

In this Kali Yuga, the Kalki Avatara is expected. May that Avatara bring supreme joy, peace, bliss and happiness to the whole world! Glory, glory unto Avataras!

23

The Rationale of Saguna Worship

Whatsoever form any devotee desires to worship with faith, that same faith of his I make firm and unflinching.

(VII-21)

Man does not get full satisfaction from sensual pleasures. He always feels that he is in want of something. He is restless and discontented. Then he longs to come into conscious communion with the Lord of the universe and to attain immortality and everlasting peace. This ultimate craving of man finds its satisfaction in worship. The individual soul desires to unite himself with his father, the Supreme Soul. This is done through worship. Love and devotion naturally arise in the heart of man when he hears the glory and greatness of the Lord. An object of worship is therefore necessary for man to pour forth his love and devotion. Worship helps spiritual evolution and eventually brings the devotee face to face with God. As the Absolute cannot be comprehended by the limited and finite mind, the concept of the impersonal God in His lower, limited form came into existence. The Nirguna Brahman assumed forms for the pious worship of the devotees.

Worship is the expression of the love and devotion of the devotee for the Lord, of his extreme reverence for Him, of his keen longing to be in conscious communion, of eager aspiration to be always at His Feet, of intense craving to be united with Him. The devotee feels the pangs of his separation from the Lord. He sheds profuse tears and sings of His glories, splendour and greatness. Worship may take the form of prayer, of praises, of meditation and of Kirtan.

Worship differs according to the growth and evolution of the individual. There is Nature-worship. The Parsis worship the element of fire. Hindus worship the Ganges, the cows, the Asvattha tree and the Tulasi plant. In the Vedas there are hymns to Indra, Varuna, Agni and Vayu. This is Natureworship.

There is also hero-worship. Great heroes like Shivaji and Napoleon are worshipped even now. In hero-worship the individual imbibes the virtues of the person whom he worships. Birthday celebrations of great persons and their anniversary celebrations are forms of worship.

Then there is the worship of relics. Hairs and bones of departed souls are also worshipped. We also have the Pitriworship or worship of the forefathers.

There is the worship of Gurus, of Rishis, of Deities. As man evolves, he passes from one stage of worship to another. The lower stages drop away by themselves. A man of a higher stage should not condemn his brother who is in a lower stage. One should not forget the underlying, indwelling, interpenetrating Essence or Intelligence when one does any kind of worship. The fundamental object in worship is union with the Lord who pervades or permeates all names and forms. This has to be achieved by developing intense love.

Whilst all things may be objects of worship, a choice has to be made of those objects which, by reason of their effect on the mind, are more fitted for it. An image, a picture, or one of the useful emblems, is likely to raise in the mind of the worshipper the thought of a Deity. The idol easily induces concentration of mind. Everybody has predilection for a symbol, emblem or image. The idol, the sun, fire, water, the Ganges and the Shiva-Linga are all symbols of God which assist aspirants to attain one-pointedness of mind and purity of heart. These reflect personal inclinations in the worshipper, due to his belief in the special efficacy of a particular object of worship for him. Psychologically, all this means that a

particular mind finds that it works best in a desired direction by means of particular instruments or emblems or images.

The vast majority of people have either impure minds or weak minds. Therefore, the object of worship must be pure for these people. Those objects that are capable of exciting lust and dislike should be avoided. But an advanced aspirant, who has a pure mind and who sees the Divine Presence everywhere and in everything, can worship any object.

In worship, an image or a picture representing some divine form is used as the object of worship. The image is adored. An image or idol represents the form of the particular Deity that is invoked in it. The Shiva-Linga represents Lord Shiva. It represents the secondless, formless Brahman.

The *Srutis* most emphatically declare: "Ekamevadvitiyam Brahma-The Brahman is one without a second. There is no duality here. The Linga is shining and attractive to the eye. It helps concentration. Ravana propitiated Shiva and obtained boons by worshipping the Linga.

The Saligram is an idol of Lord Vishnu. It is the symbol of Vishnu. There are images of other Hindu gods and goddesses to suit the taste of particular devotees.

The images of Vishnu and His Avataras, and the images of Shakti and Shiva, are the popular idols that are worshipped both in temples and in homes. The idols in the temples in places like Tirupati, Pandharpur, Palani and Kathirgama are powerful Deities. They are Deities that grant boons to the devotees cure their ailments and give Darshan. Wonderful Lilas are associated with these Deities. There is no polytheism in Hinduism. Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and Shakti are different aspects of the one Lord.

The devotee sometimes selects his family Deity for his worship. Sometimes, the Deity is chosen for him by

his Guru. Sometimes, he himself chooses that Deity which appeals to him most. This form is his tutelary Deity.

God reveals Himself to His devotees in a variety of ways. He assumes the very form which the devotee has chosen for his worship. If you worship Him as Lord Hari with four hands, He will come to you as Hari. If you adore Him as Shiva, He will appear before you as Shiva. If you worship Him as Mother Durga or Kali, He will come to you as Durga or Kali. If you worship Him as Lord Rama, Lord Krishna or Lord Dattatreya, He will come to you as Rama, Krishna and Dattatreya. If you worship Him as Christ or Allah, He will give you His vision as Christ or Allah.

You may worship Lord Shiva or Lord Hari, Lord Ganesha or Lord Subrahmanya or any of the Avataras, like Lord Rama or Lord Krishna. You may worship Saraswathi or Lakshmi, Gayatri or Kali, Durga or Chandi. All are aspects of the one Lord. Under whatever name and form it may be, it is the Lord who is adored. Worship goes to the indweller, the Lord in the form which is being worshipped. It is sheer ignorance to think that one form is superior to another. All forms are one and the same. Shiva, Vishnu, Gayatri, Rama, Krishna, Devi and Brahman are one. All worship goes to the one basic Reality—the Supreme Brahman. The differences are only differences in name and form, on account of differences in the worshippers. There is no difference in the essential object of worship.

Worship of Lord Jesus or Lord Mohammed or Sri Guru Nanak or Lord Buddha or Lord Mahavira is really worship of Brahman only. These are all manifestations of His forms. It is only out of ignorance that different religionists and different sects fight and quarrel amongst themselves. Therefore, be tolerant and have a broad outlook on life because the basic essentials of all religions and paths leading to God are the same.

24

The Four Types of Devotees

Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna-the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and wise, O lord of the Bharatas!

(VIII-16)

Bhaktas or devotees of God are of four types-the Arta, the Jijnasu, the Artarthi and the Jnani.

The Arta is the distressed devotee who is suffering very much and who craves for the Grace of God in order to get himself relieved of pain and sorrow.

The Jijnasu is the seeker after knowledge who feels that he is ignorant and wants the Grace of God in order to have wisdom.

The Artarthi is the seeker of wealth who longs for earthly possessions, money and land in order to enjoy a happy life. He propitiates God in order to get His Grace which will enable him to amass wealth.

The Jnani is the wise man, the sage, who is satisfied in the Self, who is contented in the Self, who has no desires, who is freed from desires, who has all desires fulfilled, whose only desire is the Self, and who considers his own Self as the allinclusive God.

The distressed is he who is suffering from any chronic, incurable disease, whose life is in jeopardy on account of an earthquake, a volcanic eruption or thunder, an attack by a dacoit, a tiger or an enemy. Draupadi and Gajendra were examples of Arta Bhaktas. When Dushasana dragged before the court of the Kauravas and tried to disrobe her, Draupadi cried for Krishna in order to protect her modesty. Gajendra

called on Narayana when a crocodile was dragging him into the water.

The Jijnasu is the enquirer. He is dissatisfied with the world.There is a void in his life. He always feels that sensual pleasure is not the highest form of happiness and that there is pure eternal bliss unmixed with grief and pain, which is to be found within. Uddhava was a Jijnasu. He was dissatisfied with the world and obtained wisdom from Sri Krishna. This is recorded in the *Bhagavata.*

The seeker after wealth craves for money, wife, children, position, name and fame. Sugriva and Dhruva were Artarthi Bhaktas. Sugriva wanted to drive away Vali and get his kingdom. Vibhishana wanted to put an end to Ravana and get Lanka. Dhruva wanted a kingdom where his step-mother would not trouble and ill-treat him.

The Jnani is a man of knowledge who has attained Self-illumination. Suka Maharishi was a Jnani Bhakta. He was a Brahma-Jnani of the highest type. He realised that everything was his own Self. He taught the *Srimad Bhagavata* to Parikshit.

There is yet another type of Bhakta called Vaira Bhakta. This Bhakta is a negative type of devotee. He does not have positive devotion to the Lord. He hates the Lord and thus remembers Him constantly. Hatred also requires a constant remembrance of the enemy. So, such an individual is also a kind of devotee only. He attains salvation through Vaira Bhakti. Kamsa, Sisupala and others thought of Lord Krishna constantly on account of their deep hatred for Him. They thus attained salvation on being killed by Krishna.

The devotion of the distressed, of the seeker of knowledge, and of the selfish man is, after all, secondary, as they have ulterior, selfish motives in view. But the devotion of the wise is pure and absolutely unselfish. It is para Bhakti or primary devotion. The Para Bhakta has

undivided love for the Lord. He has wholehearted devotion to the Lord. He is eternally united with Him. God is dearest to him and he is dearest to God.

Love for God should be unselfish. There should be no earthly motive behind the love of God. Otherwise, it becomes only a modification of infatuation and delusion. The Arta, the Jijnasu and the Artarthi are all selfish Bhaktas. They cannot have the highest fruit of devotion. They are deluded by earthliness. Only a Jnani is a true, selfless Bhakta, flooded with the majesty and grandeur of emotionless peace. The highest kind of Bhakta is one who wants nothing from God. He merely wants God. He says, "O Lord! I want Thee. Nothing else do I want. What is there which I have to get after getting Thee, the source and root of everything?"

When wheat is obtained, then all its preparations like *parotta, halva* and other modifications are also obtained. When gold is obtained, all ornaments of gold are also obtained. When God is attained, everything else is attained. The devotee is lost in the consciousness of God. He plunges into the ocean of bliss. He takes a bath in the sea of nectar. He drinks deep of the essence of immortality. He becomes an Apta-Kama, for he attains God.

25

Bhaktas Are Above Caste and Creed

For, taking refuge in Me, they also who, O Partha, may be of a sinful birth-women, Vaishyas as well as Sudras-even they attain the Supreme Goal!

(IX-32)

In the *Adhyatma Ramayana* also Sri Rama says: "Sex, birth, reputation and status do not confer any title to My worship; only devotion, Adhikara or fitness, competence do".

However widely the saints may differ in other respects, they are all alike in their pure and one-pointed love of God.

You should not judge a devotee or a saint by his birth or literary attainments. Kabir was a common weaver, Raidạs was a sweeper, Nandan an untouchable, Sadan a butcher, and yet they were great spiritual lights. Visvamitra, Vyasa, Kavasa, Jabala, Mahidasa, Nammalvar, Kannappar, Tukaram and many others were not Brahmins, and yet they were great spiritual luminaries.

In devotion, one's caste, culture, physical appearance, birth, possessions and occupation do not matter. He who has dedicated his all at the Feet of the Lord and who constantly remembers the Lord, succeeds in attaining Cod-consciousness, no matter whether he is a Brahmin or a labourer, educated or uneducated, high-born or low-born, goodlooking or ugly-looking, wealthy or poor.

Nishada was born in a low caste; Sabari was a rustic woman; Dhruva was an uneducated young boy Vidura and Sudama were very poor; Vibhishana was an ugly

Rakshasa; Hanuman was a monkey; Jatayu was a bird; Gajendra was an elephant; the Gopis of Brindavan were not initiated into Vedic rites. But all these devotees attained God-realisation on account of their devotion and self-surrender.

The institution of Varnashrama is not condemned thereby. Bhakti and observance of the rules of Varnashrama are two separate things. They should not be confounded. Those who try to abolish the distinction in the name of Bhakti bring slur on Bhakti. Therefore, devotees should never try to repudiate the authority of the scriptures. A devotee should not be treated with contempt on account of birth and other things. He should be judged by his purity and devotion alone. Discrimination among devotees on other grounds, like caste, has been declared as an offence in Vaishnavite scriptures.

A saint rises above the three Gunas. He has Para-Vidya or the highest knowledge through direct God-realisation. He shines with the resplendence of divine illumination. He does not belong to one caste or community but to the whole of humanity. That is the reason why there is no distinction of caste among the saints.

There is no distinction based upon appearance either. Ashtavakra had eight defects in his physical appearance. Agastya was a dwarf. Some may be clean-shaven while others may have matted hair.

Saints can come out of any race. St. Francis, St Catherine and several others belonged to the Western race. They were realised souls. There have been saints among Muslims. Kabir is an instance. Saintliness is not affected by distinction between the rich and the poor and between one profession and another.

The discipline of surrender to the Lord does not demand the special qualifications of caste, birth, clan and sex. He who has devotion to the Lord is a Brahmin;

he who has no faith in the Lord is a Sudra. An outcaste who has devotion and who is leading a life divine is far superior to a Brahmin who is leading a vicious and abominable life.

The distinctions exist when a man is petty-minded. These differences are created by the mind on account of ignorance. They all melt away when one gets Darshan of God. Love is a great leveller indeed. It develops equal vision. The advanced Bhakta is one who has transcended the orders or stages of life. The petty rules of society and man-made laws cannot in any way bind him. He becomes absolutely free. He acts from his own viewpoint while resting in God. His will and the Cosmic Will have become one. His voice is the voice of God. His words are infallible. God speaks and acts through him. His ways are mysterious and incomprehensible. He takes food from the hands of anybody. He dines with a scavenger even.

Narsi Mehta did Kirtan in the homes of cobblers and scavengers. The orthodox Brahmins ex-communicated him on this account. He once attended a feast and the other Brahmins ill-treated him and looked upon him with contempt. To their amazement they saw a cobbler on either side of Narsi Mehta. They understood his glory and from that time onwards they began to adore him.

Kanak Das was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. He lived in Udupi, in the district of South Canara, in South India. He was not allowed to enter the temple on account of his low birth. Kanak Das went around the temple and saw a small window at the back. He seated himself in front of the window. He was soon lost in singing songs in praise of Lord Krishna. Many people gathered around him. They were very much attracted by the sweet melody of his songs and the depth of his devotion. The image of Lord Krishna in the temple turned round to enable Kanak Das to get His Darshan. The priests were struck with wonder. Even today pilgrims are shown the window and the place where Kanak Das sat and sang.

26

Practice of the Remembrance of God

I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast Yogi who constantly remembers Me daily, not thinking of another, O Partha!

(VIII-14)

Constantly remembering the Lord throughout the life is the surest way of attaining Him. He who remembers the Lord by fits and starts, who remembers Him for six months and then leaves the practice, and again remembers Him for six months and so on, cannot attain Him.

Remembrance of the Lord at all times is known as Smarana. It is unbroken memory of the Name and form of the Lord. The mind does not think of any object of the world. It is ever engrossed in the thought of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on what is heard about the glories of the Lord and His virtues and Names, and forgets even the body. It is contented in the remembrance of God, just as Dhruva and Prahlada did. Even Japa is only remembrance of God and comes under this category of Bhakti. Remembrance also includes listening to the stories pertaining to the Lord, talking of Him, teaching others about Him and meditating on His attributes constantly.

There is no particular time for practising remembrance of God. He is to be remembered at all times without any break, as long as one has one's consciousness intact. Right from his getting up from sleep in the morning, until he is completely overpowered by sleep at night, a person is to remember God. He has no other duty in this world except the remembrance of God. The remembrance of God alone can destroy all worldly

impressions. The remembrances of God alone can turn the mind away from sense-objects.

Generally, the mind runs outside, but the remembrance of God makes it introvert and does not allow it to run to particular objects of the world. The remembrance of God is a very difficult method of Sadhana. It is not possible to remember Him at all times continuously. The mind deceives the person. He may think that he is meditating on God but actually he will only be thinking about some object of the world or something to do with name and fame. The remembrance is equal to concentration or meditation. All the qualities which a Raja Yogi prescribes for the practice of meditation should be acquired by a Bhakta who wishes to practise Smarana-Bhakti. Smarana is swimming against the forceful current of the river of Maya. Smarana leads to exclusive meditation on God, as is practised in Raja Yoga.

The company of sincere devotees is an auxiliary to the remembrance of God. The service of Mahatmas and saints is yet another necessity. The mind cannot but remember divine things when it is in the company of divine people. Therefore, one should have Satsang and always live with a saint or a great Bhakta. He should not be perturbed by the censure or ridicule of the world. He should rely upon God and rest assured that He will help him in all troubles and grant final emancipation.

The remembrance of the Lord has given liberation even to those who thought of Him through hatred, just as a worm, through its hatred and fear of the wasp, meditates on it and attains the state of the latter. Haters of the Lord, like Kamsa and Sisupala, attained liberation through Vaira-Bhakti. Constant remembrance is the fruit of all the methods of Sadhana. This is the most potent method and the most difficult also.

A miser does not forget his wealth even while he is engaged in other duties. A lustful man does not forget his

beloved at any time. A cow does not forget its calf even while it grazes. Even so, a worldly man, though he may be engaged in the duties of life, should practise the remembrance of God.

Prahlada practised the remembrance of God. He never forgot God at any time. He was tortured by his cruel father in all possible manner but the devoted Prahlada crossed all these troubles and attained the supreme Grace of the Lord. Prahlada was lost in the consciousness of the Lord. Such should be the ardent aspiration of all devotees. The seventh Skanda of the Bhagavata gives a beautiful description of how Prahlada practised Bhakti even amidst difficult and trying conditions.

27

The Implications of Self-surrender

Fly unto Him for refuge with all thy being, O Bharata: by His Grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace and the eternal abode!

(XVIII-62)

Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone, I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not.

(XVIII-66)

The gist of the teachings of Lord Krishna is here. If anyone can live in the true spirit of these verses, he will realise the goal of life soon. There is no doubt of this.

The self-surrender must be pure, total, ungrudging and unreserved. You must not keep certain desires for your secret gratification.

A real devotee will not ask the Lord even for liberation. As long as the subtle desire for liberation lingers in his heart, he cannot claim to be a true devotee. Though the desire for emancipation is of a Sattwic nature, yet the devotee has become a slave of it. He is still selfish and so is unfit to call himself a sincere lover of God. He has not yet made total, unreserved self-surrender. To ask for liberation is a variety of hypocrisy. Can a true devotee dare ask anything of the Lord, when he knows fully that He is an ocean of love and compassion?

A real devotee never complains against God. A raw Bhakta speaks ill of God when he is in distress. He says, "I have done twenty-five lakhs of japa. I am studying the *Bhagavata* daily. Yet God is not pleased with me. He has not removed my sufferings. God is blind. He has not

heard my prayers. What sort of God is He? I have no faith in Him."

A real Bhakta rejoices in suffering, pain and destitution. He welcomes grief and sorrow always so that he may not forget God even for a second. He has the firm belief that God does everything for his good only. Kunti Devi prayed to Krishna: "O Lord! give me pain always. Then only will I ever remember Thee."

In Puri, a saint who had completely dedicated himself to Lord Hari was seriously ailing from chronic dysentery. He became quite helpless. Lord Hari served him for months in the form of a servant. The law of Karma is inexorable. None can escape the operation of this infallible law. The Lord did not want the Bhakta to take another birth for the exhaustion of his Prarabdha Karma. So the saint had to suffer from the protracted ailment. This was his Karmic purgation. But He himself served him, as the saint had surrendered himself completely. Look at the unbounded mercy of the Lord! He becomes a slave of His devotees when they depend upon Him entirely.

Self-surrender does not mean retirement into the forest. It does not mean giving up of all activities. Tamas or inertia is often mistaken for self-surrender. This is a sad mistake. What is wanted is internal surrender. The ego and desire have to be annihilated. The Rajasic mind stands too obstinate to effect complete self-surrender. The lower nature again and again raises its head to assert itself. There is a resurrection of desires. These desires get suppressed for some time and manifest with redoubled force. Man is dragged hither and thither by these desires. Believe in divine possibilities. Completely dedicate yourself to the Lord. Have full trust in Him. Rest in peace. All cares, worries, anxieties, tribulations and egoistic efforts will now terminate.

Look at the surrender of Prahlada and his faith in God! He had completely resigned himself to Lord Hari. No

other thought save that of God occupied his mind. He had His full Grace and benediction even though he was ill-treated by his father in a variety of ways. He was hurled down from the top of a cliff; he was trampled upon by an elephant; he was poisoned; he was thrown into the sea with his legs tied with iron chains; cobras were thrown over him; his nose was filled with poisonous gas; he was thrown into the fire; boiling oil was poured over his head-yet Prahlada's faith in Lord Narayana was not shaken even a bit. The Name of Narayana was always on his lips. Such must be the faith of every devotee.

The lower nature must be thoroughly overhauled. All old wrong habits have to be completely destroyed. Then the surrender becomes complete. Do not make plans and do not speculate. "Sufflcient unto the day is the evil thereof'. Keep the mind and intellect passive. Allow the Divine Will and Grace to work through your mind and senses. Become silent. Feel His Grace and love and enjoy the divine ecstasy. Be at ease.

Pray to God fervently: "O Lord! make my will strong to resist all temptations, to control my senses and lower nature, to change my old evil habits, and to make my surrender complete and real. Enthrone Thyself in my heart. Do not leave this place even for a second. Use my body, mind and organs as instruments. Make me fit to dwell in Thee for ever."

Egoism, ambition and desire are obstacles in the way of self-surrender. Subtle, hidden desires will try to come to the surface of the mind. Desires which had been suppressed for some time will again manifest with redoubled force if the aspirant is not careful, if there is some waning in his dispassion and spiritual practice, and if he mixes with worldly-minded people. Generally, the aspirant, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, keeps up some desires for his secret gratification. He does not wish to part completely with his desires. Therefore, the self-surrender does not become perfect and unreserved. So the Grace of the Lord

does not descend in its fullest measure. Even if there is an atom of desire or egoism, there is no possibility of a full measure of the Divine Grace.

Mira says: "I have given up my mind, my heart, my soul, my intellect, my all to my beloved Girdhar Gopal. This is complete self-surrender. Mark the words "my all". The Lord becomes a slave of the Bhakta only when the latter has made absolute, ungrudging self-surrender. He is very cruel and puts His devotee to severe tests and trials. Only when Surdas pricked his eyes with the thorns and remained without food and water in the thick jungle, did Lord Krishna appear before him with sweetmeats and water. When Draupadi was being disrobed, He did not heed her as long as she tried to keep up her own strength and had traces of egoism. When she cried aloud with perfect sincerity and total resignation: "O Dwarakanath! O my Beloved! come to my rescue," He ran to the scene and she had abundant cloth and her modesty was saved.

Renunciation of egoism is Sarva-Tyaga. It is renunciation of everything. All desires, selfishness, attraction, repulsion and the body-idea hang on egoism. Egoism is the pivot on which all these are centred. Kill egoism. Then the surrender will become complete. Even if there is a tinge of egoism, the Lord will not reveal Himself.

The self-arrogating little ego persists and resists again and again. It clings leech-like to its old habits, cravings and desires. It wages guerilla war. It resists surrender. It demands certain objects for its secret gratification. The whole being should be surrendered. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: "Fly unto Him for refuge with all thy being, O Bharata!"

Mark the words, "with all thy being". The whole heart, mind, intellect, subconscious mind and soul must be given to God without any reservation. When you

meditate, you must be free from thoughts of fear, worry and anxiety.

Lord Hari came out of a pillar in the form of Narasimha when Prahlada prayed with his full heart, "with all his being". Prahlada said to his father, "My Narayana is in your heart. He is in my heart also. He is in this straw. He is in this pillar too."

Prahlada pointed out the four places. But why did Lord Narayana come out of the pillar? Because Prahlada had his full concentration with full feeling on the pillar alone. He wished that Lord Narayana should come out of the pillar. This was his concentrated thought.

The vulgar, stiff, obstinate ego is harder than diamond, reinforced concrete or steel. It is very difficult to melt it. Constant vigilance and ceaseless effort are necessary to slay this dire enemy of peace and wisdom. It keeps many subtle desires for its own silent gratification. Introspect and find out these subtle desires that lurk in the corners of your heart with the searchlight of concentration and discrimination, and kill them ruthlessly through regular, silent meditation.

Do not bother about taking too much care of your body. God will save it if He needs it for further service. Surrender it at His Feet and rest in peace. He will take care of it. A real devotee says, "Let me take millions of births, it does not matter. But let me be attached to the Lotus Feet of Lord Hari. Let me have spontaneous devotion to the Lord. Let me be endowed with purity, spiritual strength, the spirit of selfless service and divine virtues."

If you simply say without real inner feeling, "I am thine, O Lord!" this will not constitute real integral self-surrender. It should come from the core of your heart. You must be prepared for a radical change. You should not stick to your old habits, ways and motives. You should not expect that everything should happen in the way you want. You should live to carry out the divine

purpose. You should not think of those ambitions which the mind likes to gratify. You should not think of using even the Divine Grace or the divine force for your own purpose. The irrepressible ego will assert itself in various ways and refuse to give up its old habits. It will try to get everything from the Divine. It will totally decline to give itself to the Divine. That is the reason why aspirants do not make any substantial progress on the spiritual path even after doing Sadhana for several years.

Only when the devotee has completely killed his egoism, when he has made perfect self-surrender without any reservation or any secret desire for his gratification, when he thirsts like a fish that is out of the water for meeting his Beloved, when he feels the separation from the Lord intensely, when the fire of separation scorches him to the extreme degree,-then and only then will the Lord appear before the devotee. Then only will He wipe his tears, feed him with His own hands and carry him on His shoulders.

There is no loss in total, unreserved self-surrender. It is not at all a bad bargain. It is a mighty gain indeed. You will have to give up your body, mind, soul and possessions unto Him. The Lord will then give Himself unto you in a similar measure. The whole wealth of the Lord will then belong to you. He will become your own. You would have purchased Him by showing your love unto Him. He will become your slave now. You will become one with the Lord, just as the sugar, when dissolved in water, becomes one with the water. What He wants is your whole heart, fully charged with pure love. The devotee should say, "I am Thine and Thou art mine also." Even if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness, you cannot attain Him.

The lover who has developed supreme love is not a slave of forms, formalities and dogmas. He is not bound by the rules of society. There is no outward show. There is no ringing of bells. He does not care for the sarcastic remarks of the world. His state is indescribable.

In self-surrender the devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. He loses even his own little self. He has no personal and independent existence. He has given up his self to God. He has become a part and parcel of God. God takes care of him and treats him as Himself. Grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain, the devotee treats as gifts sent by God and does not attach himself to them. He considers himself as a puppet of God and an instrument in His hands. He does not feel egoistic, for he has no ego. His ego has gone over to God. It is not his duty to take care of his wife and children, for he himself has no independent existence apart from Cod. God will take care of all. He knows how to lead the world on the right path. One need not think that one is born to lead the world. God is there who will look to everything which man cannot even dream of.

The devotee has no sensual craving, for he has no body, since it has been offered to God. He does not adore or love his body, for it is God's business to see to its welfare. He only feels the Presence of God and nothing else. He is fearless, for God is with him at all times. He has no enemy, for he has given himself up to God, who has no enemies or friends. He has no anxiety, for he has attained everything by attaining His Grace. He has not even the thought of salvation; rather, he does not want salvation even. He merely wants God and nothing but God. He is satisfied with the love of God, for by that there is nothing that is not attained. What is there to be attained when God has sent His Grace upon the devotee? The devotee does not want to become sugar but wants to taste it. There is pleasure in tasting sugar but not in becoming sugar itself. So the devotee feels that there is supreme joy more in loving God than in becoming one with Him. God thus takes complete care of the devotee. "I am Thine," says the devotee.

This self-surrender is absolute love of God. There is nothing but God-consciousness in the devotee. Even

against his own wishes the devotee becomes one with the Lord and loses his individuality. This is the law of being. The highest Truth is absoluteness and the soul rises above through different states of consciousness until it attains absolute perfection when it becomes identical with God. This is the culmination of all aspiration and love.

Self-surrender is the annihilation of the individual consciousness and the attainment of Absolute Consciousness. This is equal to Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The devotee flies to the state of the highest Mahabhava and merges himself in God. The wave subsides in the ocean. The spark becomes one with the fire. The ray is absorbed into the sun. The mind merges in the Absolute. The individual soul loses itself in the Self. The devotee becomes one with God. All worldly consciousness vanishes into universal Consciousness. Man becomes God and the mortal becomes the Immortal.

Whatever belongs to God becomes the possession of this highest of devotees. All his sins are destroyed. He has no duties to perform. He is a perfected soul. He is the most blessed. To him the whole world appears as mere bliss. There is only the manifestation of supreme love everywhere.

The Gopis and Bali Chakravarti practised this love. The Gopis lost themselves in Sri Krishna. Bali, the king, offered his self to the Lord. The Gopis lost themselves in God-consciousness and attained the Supreme.

There are innumerable verses in both the Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavata establishing the truth that self-surrender is the only way of attaining the Supreme. Krishna teaches Arjuna that self-surrender-total and exclusive alone-can give him peace and relieve him of all his sins.

Give up all ideas of duty and responsibility. Allow the Divine will to work unhampered now. This is the secret of surrender. You will now feel yourself a changed

being. This exalted state is ineffable. A great transformation will come upon you. You will be enveloped in a halo of divine effulgence. You will be drowned in indescribable bliss, peace and joy. Your old little self will now be dead. You will be a changed spiritual being. Your individual will will be merged in the Cosmic Will. You will be illumined with the Divine Light. All ignorance will have disappeared.

Enjoy the immortal, divine life wherein there is neither despair nor fear, neither hunger nor thirst, neither doubt nor delusion. Shine in divine splendour and glory, O my beloved Viswanath! Radiate peace and joy all around.

28

Away With Despondency

Let that be known by the name of Yoga, the severance from union with pain. This Yoga should be practised with determination and an undesponding mind.

(VI-23)

A timid man is absolutely unfit for the attainment of Selfrealisation. A coward dies several times before his death. Have no attachment to this mortal body of flesh and bone. Cast it off like a slough anywhere, just as a snake throws away its skin. Make up your mind to give up the body at any moment. Become absolutely fearless.

As long as there is the least identification with the body, so long you cannot expect Self-realisation. Exhibit an undaunted spirit and manliness. Make a firm resolve- "I will realise or die."

Do not lose heart when you are in adverse circumstances. Face all difficulties with a smiling countenance. Become a real warrior and fight your enemies within-the mind, senses, desires, impressions and cravings-which have robbed you of your Atmic jewel. Become a hero on the spiritual battlefield. You will then excel the Mussolinis and Hitlers. The spiritual battlefield demands a greater valour, patience, perseverance, strength, courage and skill than the battlefield in the outer world. Be a lion. Temptations will manifest all of a sudden without a moment's notice. You will be bewildered. There may not be any time to detect them. So be always on the alert.

O man! do not be discouraged when sorrows, difficulties and tribulations manifest in the daily battle of life. Thou art the master of thy destiny. Thou art divine. Live up to it. Feel and realise thy divine nature. Draw

courage and spiritual strength from within. There is a vast, inexhaustible magazine of power and knowledge within. Learn the ways to tap the source. Dive deep within. Sink down. Plunge into the sacred waters of immortality-the holy Triveni within. You will be quite refreshed, renovated and vivified.

Understand the laws of the universe. Move tactfully in this world. Learn the secrets of Nature. Try to know the best ways to control the mind. Conquer this mind. The conquest of the mind is really the conquest of Nature and the world.

Do not murmur. Do not grumble when troubles and sorrows descend upon you. Difficulties strengthen your will, augment your power of endurance and turn your mind towards God. Face them with a smile. In your weakness lies your real strength. Thou art invincible. Nothing can harm you. Conquer the difficulties one by one. This is the beginning of a new spiritual life, a life of expansion, glory and divine splendour. Aspire and draw. Grow. Expand, O Nirmala bold! Build up all positive virtuous qualities like fortitude, patience and courage that are dormant in you. Start a new life.

Have a new angle of vision. Arm yourself with cheerfulness, discrimination, discernment and an undaunted spirit. A glorious, brilliant future is awaiting you. Let the past be buried. You can work miracles. You can do wonders. Do not give up hope. You can destroy all the harmful effects of unfavourable planets through your pure will-force. You can command the elements and Nature. You can neutralise the effects and the evil influences of the dark, antagonistic forces that may operate against you. You can change unfavourable circumstances into the best possible ones. You can nullify destiny. Many have done this. You also can do so. Assert. Recognise. Realise. Claim thy birthright now. Thou art the immortal Self.

Determination and self-reliance are very necessary for success in Self-realisation. In the *Mundaka*

Upanishad you will find: "This Atman cannot be realised by one who is destitute of strength". Fearlessness is an important qualification for an aspirant. One should be prepared to renounce one's life at any moment. Without the renunciation of this little sensual life the eternal spiritual life cannot be attained. The quality of fearlessness comes first in the divine qualities that are enumerated in the Gita. A timid man or coward dies several times before his actual death. Every difficulty that comes on the path of spirituality is an opportunity to grow stronger and to develop your will. When you have once decided to take to the spiritual path, stick to it at any cost, nay, at the risk of your life itself, come what may. Thou art the immortal Self. Be bold. Stand up. Gird up the loins. Realise the Truth. Proclaim it everywhere.

Destiny is your own creation. You have created your destiny through thoughts and actions. You can undo the same through right thinking and right action. Even if there is an evil and antagonistic force to attack you, you can diminish its force by resolutely denying the existence of evil or resolutely turning your mind away from it. Thus, you can disarm destiny. The one thought, "I am the immortal Self, will neutralise all evil forces and influences of all malevolent planets and will infuse in you courage and inner spiritual strength. Wrong thinking is the root-cause of all human suffering. Cultivate right thought and right action. Think that you are the immortal Self. This is right thinking. Work unselfishly in terms of unity, with the feeling that you are serving the Lord in all, that all your actions are worship of Him. This is right action.

There is no such thing as sin. Sin is only a mistake. It is a mental creation. The baby-soul has to commit some mistakes during the process of its evolution. Mistakes are your best teachers. Think that you are the pure Atman. Then the idea of sin will be blown into the air.

Do not say, "Karma, Karma; my Karma has brought me to this state." Exert. Practise austerity. Concentrate. Purify.

Meditate. Do not become a fatalist. Do not yield to inertia. Do not bleat like a lamb. Roar, "Om, Om, Om," like a lion of Vedanta. See how Markandeya, who was destined to die in his sixteenth year, became a Chiranjeevi, an immortal boy of sixteen years, on account of his austerity. Note how Savitri brought back her husband to life through her austerity, how Benjamin Franklin and the late Sir T. Muthuswami Aiyer of the Madras High Court elevated themselves.

Remember, friends, that man is the master of his destiny. Viswamitra Rishi, who was a Kshatriya Raja, became a Brahmarshi like Vasishtha and even created a third world for Trisanku by his power of austerity. Rogues Jagai and Madhai of Bengal became highly developed saints. They became the disciples of Lord Gauranga. What others have done, you also can do. There is no doubt of this. You can also do wonders and miracles if you apply yourself to spiritual Sadhana, austerity and meditation.

Read the book, *Poverty to Power* by James Allen, with interest and attention. You will be inspired. Draw up a programme for your life. Follow my *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions* and *Forty Golden Precepts*. Read my books, *Practice of Yoga* and *Practice of Vedanta*. Adhere to the daily spiritual routine. Apply yourself with zeal and enthusiasm to Sadhana. Become a perfect Brahmachari. Be steady and systematic in your Yoga practices. Shine in your native, pristine Brahmic glory. Become a liberated sage. You are a child of immortality and light. Success is bound to manifest itself if you apply yourself with full trust and confidence in the Divine. Therefore, despair not. "Tat Twam Asi-Thou Art That" my dear brothers.

29

Austerity of Speech

Speech which causes no excitement, truthful, pleasant and beneficial, the practice of the study of the Vedas, are called austerity of speech.

(XVII-15)

The words of a man who practises austerity of speech cannot cause pain to others. His words will bring cheer and solace to others. His words will prove beneficial to all.

The control of speech is a difficult discipline but you will have to practise it if you want to attain supreme peace. Nothing is impossible for a man who has firm determination, sincerity of purpose, iron will, patience and perseverance.

Manu says: "One should speak what is true; one should speak what is sweet; one should not speak what is true if it is not sweet, or what is sweet if it is false; this is the ancient Dharma".

Speech, to be austere, must form an invariable combination of all the four attributes mentioned in this utterance of Manu. That is to say, it must be non-exciting and non-painful, truthful, pleasant and beneficial at the same time. If it is wanting in one or the other of these attributes, it cannot form austerity of speech. A speech may be pleasant, but if it is lacking in the other three attributes, it will no longer be considered austere.

Words possess tremendous power. By words you can encourage and cheer others. By words you can give the greatest happiness to others. By words you can ruin and displease others. By words the Guru imparts his knowledge to his students. By words the mother trains

her children. By words the orator keeps his audience spellbound. Word is Brahman or God in manifestation. So be careful in the selection of your words. Use sweet words and conquer the hearts of others. Never use harsh words. Understand and realise the power of words and become wise.

You must practise austerity of speech if you really wish to attain quick progress in meditation. You must always utter sweet, loving words. You must speak the truth at any cost. You must not speak any harsh or indecent word that is calculated to hurt the feelings of others. You should weigh your words before they are spoken. You must speak a few words only. This is austerity of speech that will conserve energy and give you peace of mind and inner strength.

Uttering harsh words, uttering falsehood, speaking ill of another at his back, and idle gossiping, are the four evil actions of the tongue. If you guard your tongue, you will be safe. You will have peace.

Before you speak, think carefully of the influence which every word will produce on the feelings of others. If it is likely to hurt the feelings of others, avoid those words. Do not bring them into expression.

Discipline the tongue properly. Think thrice before you speak, before you utter a word. Know the power of each word - that you utter and the effect it will produce on the minds of others. Do not allow the tongue to run riot. Do not be garrulous. Speak a few words. Speak sweet and loving words. A word spoken once cannot be taken back, like a shot sent at a target. Be careful in your speech. It is the speech that wounds a person more than the action. A harsh speech bleeds the heart and not the body. The wound in the body heals quickly but the wound in the heart caused by offensive speech never heals. The sufferings of the body are transitory and easily forgotten but not the sufferings of the heart. Speak

measured words. Make this a habit through protracted practice. You can then talk cautiously without thinking.

Avoid superfluity in words and be considerate in speech. Think before you talk. Never utter such words as may wound the feelings of others. Watch carefully the thoughts that arise in your mind when you move in society. Avoid impulsive speeches, emotional utterances and boisterous, bubbling expressions. Be calm, cool, serene and tranquil. Manifest a dignified personality or a magnanimous attitude.

The organ of speech produces a great deal of distraction and various sorts of quarrels. It is a restless sense. People generally talk at random whatever comes out of their lips, without any thought and care. They jest at the expense of others. In the end they fight with one another over nothing at all, over a little play of words.

Weigh every word in your inner, mental balance before it comes out. Every word is filled with Shakti or power. That man who possesses the faculty of weighing his words before expressing them will have great peace of mind. All his words will be powerful. They will produce a tremendous impression on his hearers.

The control over speech is as important as control over thought. Use measured words in writing and in speech. Lord Jesus was the only sage who used measured words in his speech. Mahatma Gandhiji was another example.

Too much talking is a bad habit which lessens the spiritual power. If a man talks too much he suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue. Quiet people cannot sit even for a second in the company of these loquacious or garrulous people. They will talk five hundred words per minute! There is an electric talking-dynamo in their tongue. They are restless people. If you lock these people for a day in a solitary room, they will die.

An enormous amount of energy is wasted by excessive talking. The energy that is spent in talking

should be carefully and vigilantlv conserved and utilised for spiritual practices and in divine contemplation. The organ of speech distracts the mind considerably. A talkative man cannot dream of having peace even for a short time. Therefore, an aspirant should speak only a few words when necessary and that too on spiritual matters only. A talkative man is unfit for the spiritual path.

30

Conquest of Anger

But by what impelled does man commit sin, though against his wishes, o Varshneya, constrained, as it were, by force?

(Ill-36)

It is desire, it is anger born of the Rajo-Guna, all-devouring, all-sinful: know this as the foe here.

(III-37)

When a man thinks of objects, attachment to them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises.

(II-62)

From anger comes delusion: from delusion loss of memory: from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination: from destruction of discrimination he perishes.

(Il-63)

He who is able, while still here, to withstand, before the liberation from the body, the impulse born out of desire and anger, he is a Yogin, he is a happy man.

(V-23)

It will be admitted on all hands that every one of us, without any exception whatsoever, is a victim of this horrible malady Indeed, control of anger will bring in its train supreme peace and immeasurable joy. As such, let me presently describe in detail what anger is, its various forms, how it affects the nervous system, its exact relationship with passion and, lastly, the various practical methods that can be safely employed to effectively eradicate it root and branch. My one fervent

appeal to all is that you will apply yourselves heart and soul in eradicating this dire disease by following these valuable practices.

Anger is a modification that arises in the mind-lake when the Gunas, Rajas and Tamas predominate. It is a Rajo-Guna modification. Some take it as a Tamo-Guna modification. It is a wave of unpleasant feeling that arises from the inner instrument when one gets displeased with another. It is, in other words, a modification of desire or passion. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also desire becomes changed into anger. It is the most formidable enemy of peace, knowledge and devotion. It is the straightest road to hell itself.

Anger is a manifestation of Shakti. In the Chandipath or *Durga Saptashati* you will find: "I bow again and again to that Devi who is seated in all beings in the form of anger".

Anger resides in the astral body but percolates into the physical body just as water percolates through the pores to the outer surface of an earthen pot.

Irritation, frowning, resentment, indignation, rage, fury and wrath are all varieties of anger, according to the degree or intensity.

If a man wants to correct and eradicate a vice in another and manifests slight anger unsefflshly as a force to check and improve him, then it is called "righteous anger" or "spiritual anger". Suppose a man molests a woman and tries to outrage her modesty; if a bystander becomes angry with the criminal, it is called "righteous indignation" or "noble rage". This is not bad. Only when the anger is the outcome of greed or selfish motives it is bad.

Sometimes a religious teacher has to manifest a little anger outwardly to correct his disciples. This is not bad. He has to do it. But he should be cool within and hot and impetuous without. He should not allow the anger to

take deep root in his mind for a long time. It should pass off the next moment, even as a wave subsides in the sea.

Anger arises in a person when he thinks of his enemy. Even if you have forgotten the feeling of annoyance, it lurks in the mind in a dormant form. The effect is there for some time. If you renew the feeling of jealousy, envy or hatred about the same person a number of times, the effect lasts for a longer time. The repetition of an angry feeling intensifies hatred. Mere ill-feeling develops into intense malice by the repetition of anger.

On days when you have many troubles, vexations and worries from morning till evening, a trifling thing causes much irritation in the mind. The balance of mind is upset by a paltry affair. A single harsh word throws you out of balance. On the contrary, when you are peaceful throughout the day, even strong abuse and severe censure do not produce any effect whatsoever.

When a man's desire is not gratified and when someone stands in the way of its fulfilment, he gets angry. The desire gets transmuted into anger. When a man is under the sway of anger, he commits all sorts of sinful deeds. He loses his memory, his understanding becomes clouded and his intellect gets perverted. Just as heat melts lead, just as heat and borax melt gold, even so, desire and anger, the heating factors of the mind, melt it. When you are angry the mind gets disturbed. Similarly, when the mind is disturbed, the body also gets disturbed. The whole nervous system is agitated. You become enervated.

Anger spoils the brain, the nervous system and the blood. When a wave arises in the mind, the Prana begins to vibrate rapidly. You get agitated and excited. The blood becomes hot. Many poisonous ingredients are formed in the blood. When the blood is agitated, the semen also is affected.

When one is angry, dark, fiery arrows shoot out from the astral body. These can be seen clearly by the clairvoyant eye In the light of modern psychology all diseases take their origin in anger. Rheumatism, heart disease and nervous diseases are all due to anger.

Once a child suckled the breast of its mother when she was in a fit of violent fury or rage. The child died immediately on account of poisoning by virulent chemical products that were thrown into the blood of the mother while she was in great excitement. Many such cases have been recorded. Such are the disastrous effects of anger. Even three minutes of violent hot temper may produce such deleterious effects on the nervous system that it may take weeks or months for the repair of the injury.

Anger clouds understanding. When the mind is violently agitated, you cannot understand a passage of a book clearly. You cannot write a letter with a cool mind. When the lamp is flickering because of the wind, you cannot see the objects clearly. Even so, when the intellect flickers or is agitated by anger, chaos is caused in it and you are not able to see and understand things properly.

An angry man may commit murder. He himself does not know what he is exactly doing. He becomes emotional and impulsive. A man, when he is angry, will talk anything. He will do anything he likes. A hot word results in fighting and stabbing. The angry man is under intoxication. He loses his consciousness for the time being. He falls a prey to anger.

A man who is a slave of anger may have washed himself well, anointed himself properly, dressed his hair and put on white garments; yet he is ugly, being overcome by anger. There are symptoms on the face to indicate the presence of anger in the mind. If you get angry often you will lose the battle of life. If you have an easily irritable mind, you will not be able to do your daily duties in an efficient manner.

If a man becomes irritable over trifling matters very often, it is a definite sign of mental weakness. When a person abuses you and when he takes away your cloth or coat, if you remain calm and serene, that is a positive sign of inner strength. Selfrestraint or self-control is a sign of great mental strength. An easily irritable man is always unjust. He is swayed by impulses and emotions.

Anger gains strength by repetition. If it is checked then and there, the man gains immense strength of will. When anger is controlled it becomes transmuted into spiritual energy that can move the three worlds. Just as heat or light is changed into electricity, so also anger becomes changed into Ojas or spiritual energy.

Enormous energy is wasted when one gets angry. The whole nervous system is shattered by an outburst of anger. The eyes become red, the body quivers, the legs and hands tremble. No one can check an angry man. He gets enormous strength for the time being and suffers a collapse after some time on account of reaction.

Too much loss of semen is the main cause of irritability and anger. Passion is the root and anger the stem. You will have to destroy the root-passion-first. Then the stem-anger-will die by itself. A passionate man is subject to greater anger. A man who has wasted his seminal energy to a great extent becomes irritated easily over little things even. A Brahmachari who has preserved his vital fluid always maintains a balanced mind. He has a cool brain at all times.

The root-cause of anger is egoism. Through right enquiry, egoism can be removed. Then alone can one control one's anger completely. Through development of the opposite virtues, such as mercy, love, peace and friendship, anger can be controlled to an enormous degree. The force can be reduced. The knowledge of the Atman alone can fry all the impressions of anger and eradicate them *in toto.*

If an aspirant has controlled anger, then half of his Sadhana is over. The control of anger means control of lust also. Control of anger is really control of the mind. He who has controlled anger cannot do any wrong or evil action. He is always just in his dealings with others.

It is very difficult to say when a man will be thrown into a fit of fury. All of a sudden he gets an irresistible fit of anger over trifling matters. When anger assumes a grave form, it becomes difficult to control. It should therefore be controlled even when it is in the form of a small ripple in the subconscious mind. One should watch one's mind very, very cautiously. Whenever there is the least symptom or indication of slight irritability, then and there it must be nipped. Then it will become very easy to control anger. Be careful and vigilant and watch the ripple. Then only are you safe.

When anger tries to exhibit itself, observe silence. Keep quiet. Never utter harsh words or use obscene language. Try to nip the anger before it emerges from the subconscious mind. You have to be very alert. It will try to come out suddenly. Before it manifests there is agitation in the mind. You must try to extirpate this agitation in the mind before it assumes a very gross form in the shape of twitching of the muscles of the face, clenching of teeth and red eyes. You have to punish the mind severely. You have to impose selfrestraint on yourself by way of fasting for a day whenever you give vent to anger or agitation.

If you strive and make a sincere effort to subdue your anger, then hatred also will cease. Even then a slight movement of impatience may linger although the angry feeling may have gone. You must eschew this slight disturbance also. For a man who is leading the divine life this is a very serious drawback.

Whenever there is a little irritability, stop all conversation and observe silence. The practice of silence daily for one or two hours is of great help in controlling

anger. Always try to speak sweet, soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard; but if the reverse is the case, it will lead to discord and disharmony. There is a sharp sword in every tongue.

If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cold water immediately. This cools down the body and the mind. Chant Om loudly like a lion for ten minutes, and then chant Om Shanti mentally or verbally for five minutes.

Think of the picture of your Deity. Pray. Repeat your Mantra for ten minutes. Gradually the anger will disappear.

Find out the real cause of your anger and try to eradicate it. If a man abuses you and calls you names, you become furious at once. Your blood becomes hot. Why do you feel offended when someone calls you a dog or a donkey? Have you now developed four legs and a tail like a dog? Why do you get excited over trifling things? Enquire: "What is this abuse? Is it not a mere vibration in the ether? Am I the body or the Atman? No one can injure the Atman. The Atman of the abuser and the abused is one. Do I really gain anything by retaliating? I waste my energy. I hurt the feelings of another man. I disturb and pollute the thought-world. I do real harm to the world by sending a current of hatred. This world is unreal. I will live here for a short time only. Let me bear this insult. Let me excuse the man. I will then develop inner mental strength and power of endurance."

You can thus very effectively eradicate the feeling of anger. A time will come when you will not get irritated even a bit by harsh words, abuses and insults of this kind. You will not pay the least heed if a man says that such and such a person has been gossiping about you. You will simply laugh away the whole matter.

You show your anger towards your servants, inferiors and helpless and weak persons only. But you do not show it towards your master or superior or strong

persons. Why? Because you practise some sort of self-restraint on account of fear. Can you not practise self-restraint towards your servants also? If you attempt to see the Lord in the servant you will not become angry with him. Anger will bring about your destruction. A person who gets irritated easily is very weak and has no mental strength. Under the influence of anger only he commits crimes, does wrong actions, insults elders and utters harsh words.

You should control anger by all the different means. Develop patience, forbearance, compassion, tolerance, mercy and love. Practise self-analysis and introspection. Enquire: "Who am I?" Enquire within yourself: "What do I gain by becoming angry? All my energy is lost when I give vent to anger. The Self is one. The Self is common in all beings. There is no anger in the Self. In hurting another, I hurt myself only. There is nothing but my own Self in everyone. The Self is an embodiment of peace." When you enquire and reflect in this manner the wave of anger will die by itself.

When you become angry towards your servant if he fails to supply your usual milk one day, raise a question within yourself: "Why should I be a slave of milk? O mind! Why do you want milk? Why should I waste my energy by getting angry?" Then the wave of anger will subside at once. It will not arise on other occasions also if you are careful and reflective.

When you become angry, look at your face in the mirror. You will be ashamed to look at your awful and ghastly face. This is another way of controlling anger. Then in future you will be careful in checking the impulse that induces a fit of anger.

Nip anger in the bud. Keep quiet and at once begin to do Japa whenever there is any occasion of you becoming angry. By following this method the chance of your getting angry will be decreased. Eventually you will be free of anger.

Do not speak when you become angry, when the anger is in the form of simple irritability. Watch. Put a break in time before it assumes the form of a big wave of anger. Start the Japa. Cultivate forgiveness. Anger can be destroyed, not by attacking it but by cultivating the opposite virtues of love and patience. Do not express anger but try to control it. First try to cut short its duration by turning the mind to Japa, study, Kirtan or any other pleasant occupation. Thin out the wave of anger first. Reduce its force by occupying the mind with some work or by diverting the mind.

Gradually, the burning caused by anger will subside. The force born of anger will lose its intensity. The attacks will not recur frequently. They will not persist for a long time. The spiritual strength born of the Sattwic potencies will come to your aid. The mind will become calmer as time goes on.

Anger can be burnt *in toto* only through the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. If you thin out this evil impulse through regular Japa and meditation, if you mitigate its force, it will not do any harm. It will be like a cobra whose poisonous fangs have been rooted out. It may raise its hood and hiss sometimes but it can be controlled quite easily.

You should not speak anything that is likely to injure even the feelings of others. You should try to control irritability and annoyance. You should not use terms like "fool", "nonsense" "rascal" and "damn" when you become excited. Watch every word that comes out of your lips. If you really want to eradicate these evil habits and traits you will have to be in close contact with a developed Yogi or with your Guru for some years. You cannot detect your own defects. You will have to obey his instructions implicitly.

You must try to remain cool and calm even under the most provocative conditions. If you are hungry and if you suffer from any disease, you will generally become

more irritable. If you have some troubles, difficulties or losses, you get irritated over little matters.

If a Sannyasin living in a cave says that he has controlled anger, you cannot believe him. The waves are for the time being suppressed. There are no occasions for him to get angry. If some transactions take place, if he is ill-treated, he will again manifest his anger. The world is a better training ground for the control of anger.

An aspirant should direct all his attention towards the conquest of this powerful enemy. Sattwic food, Japa, regular meditation, prayer, Satsang, service, enquiry, Kirtan, practice of Pranayama and Brahmacharya-all these are some of the most potent factors that pave a long way in eradicating this dire malady. A combined method should be adopted in its eradication.

Smoking, meat-eating and drinking of liquor make men very irritable. Therefore, these should be completely abandoned. Be careful in the choice of your company. When you remain in the world the association of worldly persons is unavoidable. Cut short the conversation and the period of mixing with them. Give up the company of evil characters. Talk little. Mix little. Plunge yourself in spiritual Sadhana. Develop mercy, universal love and compassion.

Meditate in the morning on the virtue of patience for ten minutes. Reflect and repeat the formula "Om patience" mentally several times daily. Remember the saints and their lives. Say unto yourself, "I am patient now. I will never get irritated from today. I will manifest the virtue of patience in my daily life. I am getting better and better."

Feel that you possess a magazine of patience. Think of the advantages of possessing this virtue and the evil effects of irritability. You may fail many times but you will develop patience gradually and become an embodiment of patience.

Do not identify yourself with the impulse of anger. When a wave arises in the mind-lake, stand as a witness of the wave. Become a spectator. Say unto yourself: "I am a witness of this modification. I am distinct from this wave. I have nothing to do with this wave." Then the wave will die by itself. It will not disturb you. Identification with the impulse of anger is the cause of human suffering. Identify yourself with the Self. Stand like a lion as a spectator of the mental menagerie.

When there is one Self in all beings, how can you hurt another being? On account of ignorance you forget yourself and harm your neighbour when he abuses you. You are overpowered by anger and then give him a blow. When the rage subsides you repent very much for your wrong action. Though you repent you repeat the sinful action after some time. Why? Because you have no inner strength to control your impulses and emotions.

"Tit for tat", "tooth for tooth", "eye for an eye", "to pay one in the same coin" is the doctrine of the savage or demoniacal man. This is his beastly or animal nature.

"To return good for evil", "to show the other cheek", "to pray for that man who has persecuted you", "to see God in the thief, in a cobra and in the fallen sister of ill-fame" is the doctrine of a God-man. This is divine nature.

Think constantly of the disastrous effects of anger and the good that comes if you have perfect control over it. Many have ruined themselves by becoming slaves of this passion. You do not gain anything by exhibiting anger towards another man. The immediate cause of the outbreak of a war is anger. Read the pages of history. You will find that many nations have ruined themselves by yielding to anger. When a desire is not gratified, it assumes the form of anger immediately. Quarrels between a husband and wife in the home arise daily because the husband has not satisfied the wants of his wife.

Anger and lust are the Shaktis of Brahman. They are the potencies of Brahman. That is why they are insatiable and not easily conquered. But they can be very easily overcome through the exercise of discrimination-another potency of Brahman-which is far more powerful. The man in whom this discrimination has dawned will gain control slowly over desire. He will eventually enjoy peace of mind.

Manifest your inner spiritual strength by eradicating all anger and cultivating love towards all beings, who are none other than your own self. Realise the Satchidananda Atman.

Glory unto those who have rooted out their anger and attained knowledge of the Self!

31
The Power of Passion

The turbulent senses, O son of Kunti, do violently carry away the mind of a wise man though he be striving to control them!

(II-60)

You are all aware of how sage Visvamitra, who performed great austerities, fell a victim to the influence of a celestial nymph. Narada also was tested by Lord Hari. Narada failed in the beginning. He was not able to understand the subtle workings of Maya. Even Lord Buddha was tested for his mental purity. He had to face temptations of every kind. He had to face Mara. It was only then, and not till then, that he had illumination under the Bodhi tree in Gaya. Satan tempted Jesus in a variety of ways.

Passion is very powerful. Many aspirants fail in the tests. One has to be very careful. Spiritual seekers will have to develop a very high standard of mental purity. Then alone will they be able to stand the test. God will place the aspirant in very unfavourable surroundings to test him. He will be tempted by young girls. Name and fame bring aspirants in close contact with householders. Women begin to worship them. They become their disciples. Gradually the aspirants get a nasty downfall. Instances are many. Aspirants should therefore hide themselves and just pass for ordinary people. They should avoid making a display of their abilities and powers.

This world is full of temptations. There is danger of a fall at every moment. A beginner is often unable to resist a temptation. He falls a prey to its influence quite readily. The aspirant must be very careful. He should observe the

injunctions of the Shastras. They pave a long way in keeping him from falling. He should not test his spiritual strength at the very outset when he has made a little progress only. Reaction may set in. The senses will revolt. The mind will become furious. He will become a victim to passion. Even at the present moment such instances of Yogis who have fallen are not lacking. When one is put to the test he fails.

Once upon a time, Sri Veda Vyasa was conducting his Vedanta class amongst his students. In the course of his lecture, he mentioned that young Brahmacharis should be very careful and not mix with young women. With all their vigilance and circumspection they might fall victims as lust was very powerful. One of his students, Jaimini, the author of *Purva Mimamsa,* was a little impertinent. He said, "Guru Maharaj, your statement is wrong. No lady can attract me. I am well established in Brahmacharya."

Vyasa said, "Jaimini, you will know about it soon. I shall be proceeding to Kashi tomorrow. I shall return within three months. Be careful. Do not be puffed up with pride."

Sri Vyasa, through his Yogic powers, assumed the form of a beautiful, young girl, with piercing eyes and a very charming face, well dressed in a thin silken garment. The lady was standing under a tree at sunset. Clouds gathered and it began to rain. Jaimini happened to pass along the route. He saw the girl, felt pity for her and addressed her thus, "O lady! you can come and stay in our Ashram. I shall give you shelter."

The woman asked, "Are you living alone? Is any female living in the Ashram?"

Jaimini replied, "I am alone. But I am a perfect Brahmachari. No lust can affect me. I am free from any kind of mental modification. You can stay there."

The lady objected, "It is not right for a young virgin to stay with a Brahmachari alone at night."

Jaimini said, "O damsel! do not be afraid. I promise you of my perfect Brahmacharya."

Then she agreed and stayed in his Ashram at night.

Jaimini slept outside and the lady was in the room. At dead of night, Jaimini began to feel the influence of lust in his mind. A little sexual craving arose. In the beginning he was absolutely pure. Then he knocked at the door and said, "O lady! the wind is blowing outside. I cannot bear the cold blasts. I wish to sleep inside."

She opened the door. Jaimini was now sleeping inside. Again the sexual craving became a little more intense and keen as he slept very close to the lady and heard the sound of her bangles. Then he arose and began to embrace her. Immediately Vyasa assumed his original form with his long beard and said, "O my dear Jaimini! What about the strength of your Brahmacharya now? What did you say when I was lecturing on this subject?"

Jaimini lowered his head in utter shame and said, "Guruji, I am wrong. Kindly pardon me."

Maya is powerful. Adam fell on account of one loose moment. Eve tempted him on account of one desire. The forbidden fruit begins to ripen before the human eye in no time. A post will look like an illustrious god and make you bow in utter submission before it. Beware of Maya and its meshes. The chains of gold can be cut asunder but not the silken meshes of Maya. A single unguarded moment is sufficient to capsize the whole casket of pearls down into the dark abyss of passion and lust.

Therefore, O dear aspirants! You will have to be very, very careful. During the period of Sadhana avoid the company of women. You must never mix with young ladies, however strong you might be. Maya works through undercurrents so stealthily that you may not be aware of your actual downfall. Needless to say the same cautions apply to women in respect of their contact with men.

Keep the mind fully occupied in spiritual pursuits. Keep yourself at the farthest distance from everything that would stir up your passions. Then only will you be safe.

Do not live with householders. Do not test your spiritual strength and purity while you are a beginner on the path. Do not rush into evil association when you are a spiritual neophyte, just to show that you have the courage to face sin and impurity. It will be a serious mistake. You will be running into grave danger. You will have a quick downfall. A small fire can be very easily extinguished by a heap of dust.

The mind has a great power of imitation. That is the reason why a spiritual aspirant is prohibited from mixing with householders. His mind will try to imitate the minds of worldlings. A downfall will eventually ensue.

Some foolish young aspirants do Sadhana for four or five years in the Himalayan caves, see some dazzling lights during meditation, hear some sounds in the ears and then think that they are realised souls. They enter the world quickly, preach, mix with householders freely and get a hopeless downfall rapidly. What you have gained in rigid Sadhana in twelve years will be lost in twelve seconds if you mix promiscuously with householders and if you do not take proper precautions. You should never come out to the plains till you attain the Self, till you become a full-blown Yogi or Jnani.

If an aspirant moves with rich people, with landlords and Rajahs, his mind will begin to imitate their luxurious habits, and before long he will get an unconscious downfall. Certain bad habits will begin to creep into him unconsciously. And he will find it difficult to tear himself away or remove these bad habits. After forty it is difficult to tear out old habits and establish new, healthy habits.

An aspirant can live only for a short time in his native place if there is an urgent call. Yogic rules and laws cannot permit him to stay there for a sufficiently

long period, however suitable the place may be and whatever be the degree of his dispassion. The force of impressions is tremendous. Unless all the impressions are thoroughly burnt through entry into the state of the pure Nirvikalpa Samadhi, it is not safe for one to stay for a long time in one's native place. He will still be in the danger zone.

After seclusion for five years the aspirant should test his mental state by coming into the world and mixing cautiously with worldly people. If there is no attraction for the senseobjects, he can be quite sure that he has reached the third Jnana-Bhumika-a stage wherein the mind has been thinned out like a slender thread.

32

Real Austerity

Those men who practise terrific austerities not enjoined by the scriptures, given to vanity and egoism, impelled by the force of lust and attachment,

Senseless, torturing all the elements in the body and Me also who dwells in the body within, know thou these to be of demoniacal resolves.

(XVII-5 & 6)

There are some who think that mortification of the body is the proper means of attaining the goal of life. They do this in order to attract attention and get money for the gratification of the senses. This is not real austerity. This is Tamasic austerity. Bodily torture will not bring emancipation. These people are not acquainted with even the first elements of the Shastras or scriptures. They mock at the religious practices of wise, elderly persons and jeer at learned men. They are puffed up with the vanity of their own greatness. They are extremely proud of their wealth and status in life. They perform unauthorised austerities. These persons do very severe austerities that are contrary to the teachings of the scriptures. They do so on the strength of desire and attachment.

Some remain naked in winter. Some Sadhus stand on one leg, raising their arms above. Some stand in water waist-deep and do Japa of their Mantra. Some stand in the hot sun. Some hang from a tree head downwards, with a fire lighted below. Some sleep and sit on a bed of sharp nails. These are all practices that develop endurance. They develop will-power.

Some perform the Panchagni austerity. They sit amidst four fires on the four sides, with the blazing sun overhead as the fifth.

Some even take the lives of children and propitiate their Deity. Instead of killing their egoism, they kill many innocent animals in the name of sacrifice. Whereas, in reality they kill the animals only to satisfy their own palate. Most horrible indeed! They speak ill of the scriptures and wander about in the forest of infatuation or delusion. They follow the dictates of passion. They inflict pain on themselves and on others also. They practise severe austerities which cause pain to themselves and to other living beings. Pitiable indeed is their lot. They are doomed for destruction.

Some make austerity the end and aim of their Sadhana. It is only a means. A little practice will serve the purpose. One should be able to walk barefoot, and without an umbrella when it is hot or when it rains. One should be able to sleep on the bare ground without a pillow. Those who wish to take to the path of renunciation should practise these while they are still in the world.

Generally, aspirants say, "I have given up the use of the umbrella. I take only one meal a day." Their whole Sadhana consists in "giving up the shirt, "giving up the sweater", and "living on bread and dhal" Their Sadhana consists in "giving up this and giving up that".

Real spiritual life does not involve any giving up or any taking up. There is no giving up or taking up. The only thing is that you should not give leniency to the mind. If you are very hungry in the morning, take one or two slices of bread and a cup of milk. Dispassion is a mental state. But you should not give leniency to the mind. It will hurl you down. Always be watchful. Be eternally vigilant.

Unnecessary torture of the body in the name of austerity is highly deplorable. This is a demoniacal kind of austerity. It is the austerity of ignorant persons. This kind of austerity is condemned by the Lord in the Gita.

The body is a moving temple of the Lord. It is an instrument for Self-realisation. You cannot do any Sadhana if the body is not kept strong and healthy. The attachment to dispassion is as much an evil as attachment to sensual objects. Give up this kind of egoistic attachment to dispassion. This egoism of a Sannyasin is more dangerous and inveterate than the egoism of worldly persons.

The egoism of dispassion is a deadly canker. It is difficult to get rid of this attachment as long as there is the body-idea. The feeling that one is a great practitioner of austerity is a kind of egoistic attachment to austerity and dispassion. The body of a Sannyasin, who has dedicated it to the service of humanity, is public property. He has no claim on it because he ever denies its existence and tries to feel that he is the Self only. The public will take care of his body.

Extreme asceticism is not at all necessary for the attainment of perfection. What is wanted is a strong mental dispassion born of strong discrimination. All bodies are not fit for the practice of severe austerities. The body will drop down if you tax it too much by way of rigid austerities. Do not spoil your health and body in the name of austerities. Have a strong, healthy body but have no attachment to it. Be prepared to give it up at any time for a noble cause.

The caretaker of a horse feeds it with proper nutrition when it is overworked, when it is ailing. Then only will the horse be ready for further work. Even so, this body should be provided with proper nutrition. Then only will it turn out good work. Then only will it regain its lost vitality on account of overwork or ailment. Work will

suffer if the body is not well attended to. When the body grows old, it must be well protected against the cold and properly taken care of. If undesirable austerities are now practised it will give way soon. Consequently, the other shore of immortality and fearlessness cannot be reached.

O Ram! neglect not this body. Society and Nature will extract and continue to extract as much work as possible from those selfless workers who have dedicated their lives to the service of humanity. They will be yoked to service till the last breath leaves their bodies.

Lord Vishnu instructs the devoted Prahlada, "My dear Prahlada, enough of your austerity. Take care of your body. Rise from your Samadhi. Serve people now. Disseminate Bhakti far and wide".

Lord Buddha also tortured the body. He did severe austerities by giving up food. Yet he was not able to attain the goal. One day he heard the following song being sung by a girl:

Fair goes the dancing when the sitar is tuned,

Tune us the sitar neither low nor high,

And we will dance away the hearts of men.

The string o'stretched breaks and the music flies,

The string o'erslack is dumb and the music dies,

Tune us the sitar neither low nor high.

Lord Buddha then ate, adopted the middle path and eventually succeeded in achieving Nirvana.

So we should go by the middle path always. The body is an instrument for the attainment of Self-realisation. In this Kali Yuga, the Prana lives in the bones. So you should not torture the body. Whatever is needed for the body you should have. You should not expose it to chill. God has given us common sense. So you should practise the "Common sense Sadhana". There is no harm in taking good, healthy food. Every man

has a different physical constitution. You should therefore use common sense in your Sadhana.

If you feel weak and cannot sit for a long period in your posture during meditation, you can take some tonic or some fruit. You should have intense dispassion internally and at the same time follow the middle path externally.

33

The Pull of the Senses

For the mind, which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his discrimination, as the wind a boat on the waters.

(II-67)

The individual soul sits on the marvellous car of the mind, passes through the gateway of the ear in the twinkling of an eye and enjoys the various kinds of music of the world. He holds the reins of the nerves of sensation, enters the domain of touch through the portals of the skin and enjoys the diverse kinds of soft objects. He roams about in the hills of beautiful forms and enjoys them through the windows of his eyes. He enters into the cave of taste through the avenue of his tongue and enjoys dainties, palatable dishes and many refreshing beverages. He enters the forest of perfumes through the doors of his nose and enjoys the different kinds of smell to his heart's content.

The five organs of perception are like the five wives of a Chinaman. Just as the wives drag the Chinaman in different directions, so also the five senses drag the passionate Jiva in five different directions. The helpless Jiva is tossed about hither and thither and becomes restless and miserable.

While you walk along Mount Road in Madras, each sense tries its level best to get hold of its objects of enjoyment and revelry. The senses revolt vehemently if you do not procure for them the required objects. The tongue drags you to the coffee hotel or to *Hotel de Angelis*. The skin says, "Let me go to the *Bombay Saits* and get a piece of China silk." The ears say, "Let us have a gramophone or a harmonium." The nose says, "Let me

have a bottle of *Otto de Rose.*" The mind, which is at the bottom of these senses, instigates them. A tumultuous internal fight goes on among the five organs of knowledge, each one trying to have a lion's share of the enjoyment.

The nose and the anus are sister organs. They are born of the same earth element, the nose from the Sattwic portion and the anus from the Rajasic portion. These two senses are the least mischievous. The olfactory sense and the olfactory nerve do not trouble one much. They can be controlled very easily.

The tongue and the genitals are born of the water element, the former from the Sattwic portion and the latter from the Rajasic. They are both sister organs. Eating strengthens the reproductive organ.

The eyes and the feet are of the fire element, the eyes from the Sattwic portion and the feet from the Rajasic. They are sister organs. The eyes like to see sights. Their sisters, the feet, say, "We are ready to take you to the fair at Allahabad. Be ready."

The skin and the hands are born of the air element, the skin from the Sattwic portion and the hands from the Rajasic. They are sister organs. The skin says, "I want silk and other smooth articles for my enjoyment." Her sisters, the hands, say, "We can feel through our tactile corpuscles. We shall get for you fine, soft silk. Do not be afraid, my dear sister!"

Speech and the ears are born of the same ether element, the ears from the Sattwic portion and speech from the Rajasic. They are sister organs. They help each other in the economy of Nature.

The most mischievous and troublesome sense-organ is the generative organ. Then comes the tongue. After it comes the organ of speech. The ears follow and after the ears, it is the eyes.

The control of the organ of taste is far more difficult than control of the genitals, because you have been

enjoying delicious articles of food even from your very birth. Lust manifests just before the age of eighteen. You indulge in sexual pleasure only for a short period in every birth. But you have to take food even during advanced senility. The control of the palate means control of all the senses.

The tongue is like a double-edged sword. It is the most powerful sense-organ. If it is controlled, all the other sense organs can easily be controlled. The tongue is a friend of the organ of generation. As soon as the stomach is filled with delicious food, the organ of reproduction gets excited. The person then begins to entertain lustful thoughts. The tongue performs two kinds of activities, namely, eating and talking. Hence it is like a double-edged sword.

If you control the eyes, if you do not allow them to run towards beautiful forms, all the other senses are not controlled. But if you fast and control the tongue by withdrawing all tasty foods, then all the other senses are controlled, because it is the tongue that fattens all the other senses. If you control the tongue then all the other senses are automatically controlled. The tongue is the most turbulent and powerful of all the senses.

Music, the cinema and sight-seeing are enjoyed in human births only. Ants and rats do not enjoy a cinema show. The sense of sight is not as powerful as the tongue.

The organ of sight serves as a loving comrade to the organ of taste. The mind is at once tickled at the sight of the yellow colour of a mango. The eyes see a beautiful mango and the different dishes that are served at the table. At once the glosso-pharyngeal nerves are stimulated. You get good appetite and relish the food. The food is rendered more palatable. A blind man may not have as good a relish as a man with sharp sight.

The three organs-the ears, eyes and tongue-externalise the mind and make a man altogether worldly. The eyes and ears are the avenues of

sense-knowledge. Close the eyes. Shut the ears either with balls of cotton, or with balls of cotton beaten with yellow bees' wax, or with the two thumbs (Yoni Mudra). Now you have destroyed two-fifths of the world. Do not allow anything to enter the mind through these two doors of sense-knowledge.

The object of Sadhana is to internalise the mind by introspection and to realise the Truth within. Control the three organs. Then you can bring the mind under discipline and prevent the mental energy from flowing externally. These organs are the main causes of making the mind restless. Control over them helps the purpose of concentrating the energy internally.

Use your discrimination always. The senses will tempt and deceive you. They are like jugglers. Maya spreads her jugglery of infatuation through the mind and the senses. So be on the alert.

Practise control of the senses through dispassion and renunciation of desires. Happiness comes through calmness of the senses, through calmness of the mind. Go to the bazaar with plenty of money in hand. Walk hither and thither for fifteen minutes. Look with greedy eyes at the various sweets. But do not purchase anything. Return home. Even if dainties are served that day at home, reject them. Have a simple diet. By so doing you will be able to control the palate which is at the root of all troubles. You will eventually control the mind also. You will develop will-power.

34

The Art of Abstraction

When, like the tortoise which withdraws on all sides its limbs, he withdraws his senses from the sense-ohjects, then his wisdom is fixed.

(11-58)

The senses are objectified desires. The will to see is the eye. The will to hear is the ear. The senses have two states—static and dynamic. When a desire begins to operate, the senses are put into operation. This is the dynamic state. As soon as the desire is gratified, the senses shrink through satisfaction. This is the static or passive state.

The mind and the senses are one. The senses are prolongations of the mind. The sea is fed by the rivers; it cannot exist without the rivers. Even so, the mind is fed by the senses and cannot exist without them. If you have controlled the senses, you have already controlled the mind. The senses are the mind.

The mind is a mass of senses. It is a higher power than the senses. It is a consolidated sense. The senses are mind in manifestation. Just as a minister obeys the king, so also the five organs of knowledge act in accordance with the dictates of the mind. The senses represent the backwaters. The desire in the mind to eat manifests as the tongue, teeth and stomach. The desire in the mind to walk manifests itself as legs and feet.

If you can control the mind, you can control all the senses. The mind is the commander-in-chief. The senses are the soldiers. They cannot do anything without the co-operation of the mind. The senses cannot perform anything independently. If you can disconnect the mind

from the senses, there will be abstraction of the senses automatically.

The senses cannot do anything if the mind is not connected to them. When you are wholly absorbed in the study of an interesting newspaper, you do not hear when your friend calls out to you. You are not aware that the clock has struck five. It is the experience of everybody. The mind was away at the time. It was then not connected to the sense of hearing. The eyes may be wide open but if the mind is somewhere else one does not see anything that may be in front of one.

The practice of Pratyahara consists in the withdrawal of the senses from the particular objects of sense. Pratyahara checks or stops the outgoing tendencies of the senses. It puts a break, as it were, on the senses. Then the senses get involved in the mind. When one is fully established in Pratyahara, then supreme control of the senses comes in. In the practice of Pratyahara, the mind has to be checked although the practice concerns the senses only.

When the senses give up the objects, they take on the form of the mind-stuff. They are drawn into the mind. This is termed Pratyahara. When the senses are withdrawn from their respective objects, it is sense-Pratyahara. Mental Pratyahara takes place when the mind is disconnected from the senses.

When the eyes run towards objects of beauty, withdraw them and fix them at the Lotus Feet of Lord Krishna. When the ears run to listen to worldly sounds and music, train them to hear the Name "Narayana". You will have to check the mind itself in the case of the other three senses, namely, that of smell, taste and feeling. You must give up perfumes, sugar, salt, chillies, tasty things and soft beds.

The discipline of the senses is a very important point. Watch every sense carefully and curb it through suitable methods such as fasting, observance of silence,

Tratak, celibacy, renunciation of sense-objects, self-restraint and Pratyahara. The curbing of the senses means curbing the mind. The senses cannot do any independent work without the direct help of the mind. Celibacy checks the genitals. The observance of silence controls the organ of speech. Tratak (gazing at a point) controls the eyes.

When you walk along in the street do not look hither and thither like a monkey. Look at your toes and walk straight. Practise Tratak when you are at home. Always fix your eyes at one point. This also will help to control the eyes. Do not visit the cinema, dancing parties or any place where there are vulgar music and frolic. Sleep on a coarse mat. Give up soft mattresses. Do not use perfume. Keep a watch on every sense and put a check then and there if it has a tendency of going astray. He who has disciplined his senses has a strong will and peace of mind. He can concentrate perfectly. He has immense inner strength. He gets success in life and also on the path of spirituality. No higher Sadhana is possible without the discipline of the senses.

In the practice of Pratyahara you will have to drag the outgoing senses again and again from sensual objects and fix the mind on your point of meditation, just as the cart driver drags the impetuous bulls and fixes them to the yoke. You must learn to drag the senses gently. Some aspirants draw them in vehemently. That is the reason why they experience a little headache occasionally.

You should practise withdrawal of the senses one by one. Deal with the most turbulent sense first. Practise Pratyahara of that particular sense to start with. Then you can take up another organ. If you try to manipulate all the senses at the same time, you will not gain success. The task will be an uphill one. You will feel quite exhausted.

One should be careful of reaction. If the aspirant is not careful, if his dispassion wanes, and if he is not regular in his Sadhana, reaction sets in and the senses become more turbulent. Control becomes very difficult. The aspirant falls hopelessly.

Dispassion and renunciation help much in the practice of Pratyahara. If one succeeds in Pratyahara, concentration comes by itself. Generally, people jump to the practice of concentration without practising Pratyahara in the beginning. That is the reason why they fail in concentration. Pratyahara is very important. The senses are starved to death by the practice of Pratyahara. They become lean and emaciated. Even if they come in close contact with sensual objects they cannot get excited. They are like serpents whose fangs have been extracted. They cannot do any harm.

If you can consciously do Pratyahara at will, consciously attaching and detaching the mind to and from the senses, you have really gained a great control over the mind. You can then check the outgoing tendencies or outgoing forces of the mind at any time. Pratyahara is the stepping stone to inner spiritual life. He who has succeeded in Pratyahara can concentrate his mind quite readily for a very long time. He can practise concentration in any place, even in a congested city. The moment he sits for meditation, his senses will get withdrawn. He will not be disturbed by external sounds. Concentration and meditation come easily if Pratyahara is perfect. An aspirant has to struggle hard to have mastery in Pratyahara. Perfect dispassion is indispensable for success in Pratyahara. You can succeed after strenuous and incessant struggle for some years.

During the period of Sadhana, do not mix much. Do not talk much. Do not walk much. Do not eat much. Do not sleep much. Observe the five "do nots". Mixing much will cause great disturbance in the mind. Talking much will cause distraction. Walking much will cause

exhaustion and weakness. Eating much will induce laziness and drowsiness.

If you have the reins of the horses under your control, you can have a safe journey. The senses are the horses. If you have them under your control, you can have a safe journey to the goal of liberation. The senses cannot do anything without the help of the mind, their master and commander. The control of the senses means control of the mind only. Control of thoughts leads to control of the mind and the senses also. It leads to the attainment of infinite bliss and eternal life. The control of thought is indispensable. It is a great *desideratum* for all.

The Yogic student should practise Pratyahara after getting some success in the practice of Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama. Pratyahara follows automatically the practice of Pranayama. When the life-force is controlled by regulation or restraint of the breath, the senses get thinned out. They are starved to death. They get emaciated. They cannot hiss now when they come into contact with their objects.

Pratyahara is a trying discipline indeed. It is disgusting in the beginning but later on it becomes very interesting. You will feel inner strength. It demands considerable patience and perseverance. It will give you tremendous power. You will develop immense will-power. During the course of the practice the senses will run again and again like wild bulls towards objects. You will have to withdraw them repeatedly and fix the mind on the point of meditation. That Yogi who is well established in Pratyahara can meditate quite calmly even in the battlefield where machine-guns roar in a continuous stream.

The wife of sage Tiruvalluvar had remarkable success in the practice of Pratyahara. She carried on her head a pot filled to the brim with water and moved amidst a big crowd. She did not allow a drop of water to spill. He who is proficient in Pratyahara can enter into deep sleep

the moment he lies down on his bed. Napoleon could do this as he was very proficient in Pratyahara.

Sukadev had wonderful Pratyahara. He was tested by Raja Janaka in the latter's palace. Raja Janaka arranged for music and dancing parties all around his palace to distract the attention of Sukadev. There were various kinds of shows and entertainments. Sukadev was requested to carry in his hand a cup of milk filled to the very brim and go round the palace three times without allowing even a drop to fall to the ground. Sukadev had complete success in his attempt as he was fully established in Pratyahara. Nothing could distract his mind.

Success in Pratyahara depends upon the strength of past Yogic impressions which the student possesses. He who has diligently practised Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara in his previous births to some extent, will have success in Pratyahara within a short time in this birth. A beginner who attempts to practise Yoga for the first time in this birth, who has no previous Samskaras of past births to his credit, may take quite a long time to achieve some definite and positive success in Pratyahara. One can feel from his own experiences and degree of success in his Yoga practice whether he is a neophyte or an accomplished Yogi.

35

The Conquest of Raga-Dwesha

Attachment and aversion for the objects of the senses abide in the senses: let none come under their sway, for they are his foes.

(III-34)

Raga is liking, attraction, love, attachment. Dwesha is dislike, repulsion, hatred. Raga-Dwesha are the two mental modifications that arise from the mind. They are born of ignorance or nescience. They are the products of ignorance. This mysterious worldly existence is kept up by Raga-Dwesha. These two currents are the two strong weapons of Maya, the illusory power of the Lord. The individual soul is tied to this world by this strong rope of Raga-Dwesha.

Raga-Dwesha have four states: the expanded state, the hidden state, the attenuated state and the burnt state.

The expanded state and the hidden state are present in the worldly-minded persons. Raga-Dwesha have their full vigour or virility in the expanded state in worldly persons. They do considerable harm. They overwhelm the persons. People become mere victims or preys to the two currents. They have not the least control over them.

In the hidden state, attraction and repulsion are not seen. When you quarrel with your wife, your affection is temporarily hidden. She smiles and laughs and the affection re-manifests.

Aspirants perform Sadhana. They develop dispassion and cosmic love gradually. In them the two currents get thinned out. They cannot do any havoc. They may raise their heads slowly when the aspirants

come into contact with pleasant objects but they are struck down by the strong rod of discrimination and the sword of enquiry.

In a Jivanmukta or fully developed Yogi, attraction and repulsion are burnt *in toto* through Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Go anywhere in the world, you will find Raga-Dwesha. Even in Mount Everest or Gangotri in the Himalayas you will find the two currents, because man carries with him his desires wherever he goes. Human nature is the same in all places. But if you want to evolve on the spiritual path you will have to ignore these currents and create your own atmosphere around yourself.

You will find the play of the two currents of attraction and repulsion even among the lower creatures, among plants, elements and planets. There is repulsion between the Sun and Saturn, between the Sun and Uranus. The friendship or attraction or affinity between the Sun and Mars is very strong. There is strong sympathy between Saturn and Venus. Venus and Saturn are inimical towards their master, the Sun.

Like attracts like. A songster joins other songsters, a poet joins other poets, a doctor other doctors, a rogue other rogues, a statesman other statesmen, a saint other saints.

There is an intimate connection between Raga-Dwesha, desires and the three Gunas. Raga-Dwesha themselves are impure desires that emanate from the bed of impressions of Rajas and Tamas. Desires, impressions, Gunas and Raga-Dwesha are the products of Maya's jugglery. One thing assumes various forms. One thing changes its colour like a chameleon. One thing changes its form like a ghost. Attraction becomes a desire, a desire becomes an impression, and an impression in the mind becomes a Guna. The play is very mysterious. It is very difficult,

nay, well-nigh impossible to detect the workings of Maya. Only the Lord, the indweller, the inner ruler, knows the ways of Maya, His inscrutable Shakti. If you destroy ignorance, then all the links of the chain of ignorance are broken at once, at one stroke.

Wherever there is repulsion, there you will find anger. Anger is a long-standing associate of repulsion. Fear is an old friend of attraction. Wherever there is attraction, there you will find fear. Man is afraid of losing the objects of his possession as he is intensely attached to them. Wherever there is pleasure, there you will find attraction. Wherever there is pain, there you will find hatred.

You love sweetmeats or mangoes because you derive pleasure from them. So you are attached to them. You hate a scorpion because it gives you pain.

Raga-Dwesha is the real Karma. Trees, rivers and other objects do not constitute the world. Raga-Dwesha is the real world. There is no world for that sage who has neither attraction nor repulsion. The mind runs into the same grooves cut by Raga-Dwesha. As soon as you get up from bed, the two currents begin their play. You take tea, put on your suit and hat and begin to do the same actions of eating, drinking and working again and again. You are a mere toy in the hands of Raga-Dwesha. But those who practise introspection, self-analysis and meditation rise above the two currents and attain eternal bliss and immortality. Through attraction you love a man or a woman, and you favour some. Through repulsion you hate a man or a woman, and you injure others. Thus the worldly existence has started now. Through Raga-Dwesha you perform virtuous and vicious actions. You reap a harvest of pleasure for the good actions, and pain for the wicked deeds. You are caught up in the midst of births and deaths. This six-spoked wheel of Raga-Dwesha, virtue and vice, pleasure and pain, is revolving from eternity. Only a Yogi or a sage can stop this wheel through meditation and worship.

The tree of Raga-Dwesha is deep-rooted. It ramifies in all directions. It has branches on all sides. The mind clings tenaciously to objects. If you have attraction for someone, all your family members also like the person. If you dislike the same person for some reason or the other, then all your family members dislike him without any cause. Sometimes you dislike a person without any cause or reason whatsoever. There is hatred among family members, among clans, among the different cults, creeds and religionists, among nations, among people of different schools of philosophy. You may be at attached to a man or a woman, a cat or a dog, a stick or a cloth, a house or a town.

Raga-Dwesha—the affection and aversion for the objects of the senses—abide in the senses. They are obstructions on the path of spirituality. Do not come under the domination of these two currents. Crush them or powder them through the method of substituting the opposite qualities of Raja Yogins. Develop the opposite virtues of dispassion and cosmic love. Dispassion will crush attraction; cosmic love will crush repulsion. If you have inner spiritual strength and a strong will, extract Raga-Dwesha altogether through the knowledge of Brahman, just as you extract the teeth with the forceps.

Egoism is the commander. Raga-Dwesha, pride, anger and hypocrisy are his constant attendants or the soldiers of the internal army. If you kill egoism-the commander-the soldiers will at once make an ungrudging, unconditional surrender.

From ignorance emanates non-discrimination. From non-discrimination originates egoism. From egoism emanates Raga-Dwesha. From Raga-Dwesha comes Karma. From Karma comes the body. From the body comes misery. This is the chain of bondage or misery with seven links.

If you do not want misery, do not take up a body. If you do not want a body, do not incur Karma. If you do not

want to incur Karma, give up Raga-Dwesha. If you want to give up Raga-Dwesha, give up egoism. If you want to give up egoism, give up non-discrimination. If you want to give up non-discrimination, give up ignorance. O Rama! if you do not want ignorance, get knowledge of Brahman.

May you be free from Raga-Dwesha, your real enemies of peace, devotion and knowledge! May you annihilate these enemies through the sword of knowledge! May you shine as a Jivanmukta or liberated sage in this very life itself!

36

The Pure & Impure Minds

Let a man lift himself by his own Self alone, let him not lower himself: for this Self alone is the friend of oneself and this self alone is the enemy of oneself.

The Self is the friend of the self for him who has conquered himself by the Self: but to the unconquered self, this self stands in the position of an enemy like the eternal foe.

(VI-5 & 6)

The Sattwic mind or pure mind, and the impure mind or the instinctive mind, as it is called, are the two kinds of minds according to Upanishadic teaching. There is the lower mind filled with passion. There is the higher mind filled with purity. There are thus two minds. You will have to make them into one-into the Sattwic mind only—if you want to meditate successfully. It is through the higher or Sattwic mind that you will have to control the lower or instinctive mind of passion and emotion.

There are two kinds of intellects-the worldly intellect and the pure intellect. There are two kinds of egoism, namely, pure egoism which identifies itself with Brahman, and the impure egoism, which identifies itself with the body. There are two kinds of thoughts-pure thought and impure thought. The pure thought pertains to God and the impure thought pertains to the body and the world.

The impure mind creates impure thought, impure intellect and impure egoism. All these three form a vicious circle. The three work in co-operation. The seed of the mind is egoism. The mind is merely a bundle of thoughts. Of all thoughts, the "I"-thought is the root. It is also the first thought that emanated from the mind.

Therefore, the mind is only the thought "1". The intellect is the basis of egoism. It is the intellect that forces you to identify yourself with the physical body. It is the intellect that creates difference or the idea of many in the world.

A Sattwic mind likes solitude. silence, simple living, high thinking, study of spiritual books, philosophical discussions, concentration of the mind, and the company of Sadhus, Mahatmas and Sannyasins. A stainless mind can be judged through one's speech, face and eyes. Through these expressions, the opinion can be formed whether a person has a stainless mind or not. Higher desires, noble aspirations, lofty ideals, true religious feeling, mercy, sympathy, pure unselfish love, devotion, enquiry into the nature of the Atman, inspiration, genius-all these-come from the higher, pure, Sattwic mind. The pure mind is Brahman Itself. It is an embodiment of purity itself.

A Rajasic mind likes crowded cities, much conversation, luxurious life, low thinking, the company of the opposite sex, the study of romantic novels, eating dainty dishes, and selfish activities. The instinctive mind is the lower, impure mind of passion and desire. The vast majority of persons have this instinctive mind only. Even the so-called civilised and educated persons live on the plane of the instinctive mind. Their senses are very sharp and acute and they run after more refined things for their sense gratification. They identify themselves with the physical body and the senses. They have no idea of the subtle Atman which is entirely distinct from the body and the senses. Their "I" is the physical, gross body only though they know that there is a mind.

Sensual enjoyment brings about many diseases and destroys the power of discrimination. It makes the mind impure. Therefore, shun sensual enjoyments completely. Try to realise the Self within, wherein lies eternal bliss and immortality.

A sharp, subtle, one-pointed, Sattwic mind is needed for enquiry into the nature of the Atman and for the study of the Upanishads. A gross mind and worldly intellect with selfishness and lust is absolutely unfit for enquiry into the Self and philosophical ratiocination. Selfishness clouds understanding. Selfishness is the bane of life. The mind of a worldling is ever ready to absorb sexual thoughts. It cannot imbibe subtle, philosophical ideas. It is callous and cannot vibrate properly to take in philosophical ideas. You can drive a nail into clay but not in stone. The mind has to be purified by selfless service, Japa, Pranayama and various other spiritual practices.

Brahman is to be seen by the mind. This is the utterance of the *Srutis*. Here, "mind" means the pure mind. Brahman can only be seen by a mind which is equipped with the four means of salvation, which has been rendered subtle and pure through the practice of calmness, tranquillity, self-restraint and religious observances, which is equipped with the sacred instructions of a qualified Guru, and which practises hearing, reflection and contemplation. Should the pure mind concentrate itself for some time through a study of the Jnana Shastras, association with the wise and an uninterrupted practice of meditation, then in such a mind will dawn a vision in which there will be a direct cognition of the one Reality.

The enemy of the Atman is the impure mind, which is replete with excessive delusion and a host of thoughts. This mischievous and powerful imp of the lower mind is the generator of all pain and fear and the destroyer of all noble, spiritual wealth. Your real enemy is this impure mind only, which is full of delusion, cravings, desires and a host of other impurities. Lest this enemy should spoil you in diverse ways through the many "enjoyments" and "pleasures" in this world, slay it in the hope of getting eternal bliss and spiritual illumination. Destroy the lower mind with the help of the higher mind. Destroy

your instinctive mind through discrimination and with the help of your higher, Sattwic mind.

Then and then alone will you get eternal, infinite peace and the bliss of the Atman. Then alone will you become a liberated sage.

Both the Sattwic mind and the Rajasic mind move in diametrically opposite directions. The Sattwic mind unifies. The instinctive mind separates and divides. The voice of the instinctive mind misleads you. Purify the mind and hear the voice of conscience or the voice of the Sattwic mind. You have to develop the Sattwic part of the mind by annihilating the lower, impure, instinctive mind. The lower mind should be destroyed by the higher mind. Then only will you have eternal peace and happiness. Then alone will you attain liberation and have supreme knowledge and perennial bliss. Slay the impure mind through enquiry and meditation on Om, and rest in your own essential divine nature, in the state of Satchidananda.

As one iron shapes another, so also the pure mind of a person, who makes effort on the path of virtue, should correct and mould his impure mind. The mind is unfailingly rendered pure through true, virtuous actions and constant association with the wise. Speaking the truth and the practice of compassion are very great purifiers of the mind. All lofty aspirations, all-embracing love and such other tendencies go a long way in increasing the Sattwic material of the mind. The higher mind is thus gradually developed and strengthened.

Sacrifice, gift, compassion, study of the Vedas and speaking the truth-these five are purifying in their effect. The sixth is penance well practised. The last one is highly purifying. Pilgrimage to sacred places is also purifying. You come in contact with holy persons there. You can have good Satsang.

Charity, Japa, selfless service, sacrifice, Brahmacharya, tranquillity, self-restraint, study of the

scriptures, austerities, service of saints-all these tend to purify the mind. There will be unalloyed bliss in the mind thus purified.

A Mantra purifies the mind. The mere repetition of a Mantra, parrot-like, has very little effect. It does have some benefit. It must be repeated with feeling. Then it produces wonderful effects. The Mantra, unless it is inspired by the powerful will-force of one's own mind, cannot produce much effect.

Study of philosophical works, right thought, the exercise of good and noble emotions, prayers and beneficient endeavours and, above all, regular and intense meditation are the means of improving the mind. These will bring about the rapid evolution of the mind. When the mind is thus purified, a hole is formed in the centre through which purity, knowledge and light flow from Brahman.

A goldsmith converts ten carat gold into fifteen carat by adding acids and smelting it several times in the crucible. Even so, you will have to purify your sensuous mind through concentration and reflection on the words of your spiritual preceptor and on the Upanishadic sentences. You will have to cleanse the mind through meditation, Japa and such other spiritual practices.

It takes a long time to purify the yellow oxide of arsenic. It has to be soaked in cow's urine for seven days, in lime water for ten days and in milk for a further seven days. Then it has to be burnt out a hundred and eight times before a proper oxide is obtained. Even so, it takes an extremely long time to effect purity of mind. Severe austerity is needed.

Arsenic, when purified and administered in proper doses, is a blessing. It removes many diseases. It improves the blood. But when not purified properly or given in overdoses, the same arsenic brings about many ill-effects. Even so, when the mind is rendered pure, it leads to liberation; when it is impure, it leads to bondage.

Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation. Mind is everything. It is your true friend as well as your bitter enemy. The impure mind is your enemy. It causes various sorts of attachments. It is filled with numerous base desires and appetites. The higher mind is a rare friend and benefactor, because it imparts true counsel in the way of attaining the supreme goal of life. The higher mind becomes your guiding Guru. Hear its sweet, small voice and follow its instructions. The voice of the pure mind is the voice of God. It is an infallible voice.

There is no other vessel on this earth to enable you to wade through the ocean of worldly existence than the mastery of the lower instinctive mind. The sovereign specific presented by the wise sages for the eradication of the mind's disease can be had easily through the mind alone. Intelligent persons cleanse a dirty cloth with the dirty earth only. A murderous fire missile is counteracted by the water missile. The venom of serpent-bite is removed by its antidote of an edible poison. So also is the case with the Jiva. Having developed discrimination, destroy the delusions of the heterogeneous mind through the one-pointed mind, like an iron severing another iron.

When all the impurities of the mind are completely removed, the instinctive mind dies away; only the Sattwic mind or the higher mind remains. A pure mind is Brahman Itself. Just as camphor in the presence of fire is turned into fire and absorbed in it when burnt, so also the mind, when purified, becomes of the nature of Brahman. Just as water, when a lump of salt is placed in it, becomes salty, so also the mind when purified in the presence of Brahman, becomes of the nature of Brahman.

Conquer the lower mind through the higher mind. Lord Krishna says, "Let a man lift himself by his own Self alone". There is no virtue greater than self-reliance. The possession of this important quality is a *sine qua non* for all aspirants who search after Truth. Gurus and teachers only show the spiritual path, remove doubts and give

some inspiration. You are your own redeemer. You are your own saviour. Remember this point well. You have to tread the spiritual path yourself. You have to place each step yourself on the spiritual path. It is simply preposterous to think that your Guru will do the Sadhana for you. A hungry and thirsty man will have to eat and drink for himself.

Lord Buddha relied on his own self only. He practiced severe austerity for a period for six years in the Uruvela forest. Lord Jesus did severe Sadhana during the missing period of his life. It is highly lamentable indeed to see that even intelligent persons are labouring under great misapprehension and delusion and thereby wasting their precious lives owing to false hopes. They are thinking in vain that they will get a spiritual pill from their Masters and get immediate liberation, without undergoing any discipline or course of silent meditation. What a queer, foolish idea they are entertaining! It is highly deplorable indeed!

The Great Master, the living Master of masters, the source of the world, of Jivas and of everything is ever shining in the chambers of your heart. He is very close to you. He is sitting with outstretched hands to lift you up and embrace you with His sweet love. Rely on Him alone. Surrender to Him with perfect trust and confidence in His Divine Grace. Identify yourself with bold and clear understanding with that eternal, living Indweller of your heart. Then alone will you attain eternal peace, infinite bliss, supreme satisfaction and immortality. Then alone will you be entirely free from all weaknesses and defects.

Glory, glory to those who have reached this highest state by relying on their Great Master within, the Indweller of our hearts!

37

The Taming of the Mind

Abandoning without reserve all desires born of imagination, and completely restraining the whole group of senses by the mind from all sides,

Little by littie let him attain quietude by the intellect held in firmness: having got the mind established in the Self, let him not think of anything.

From whatever cause the restless and unsteady mind wanders away, from that let him restrain it and bring it under the control of the Self alone.

(VI-24, 25 & 26)

One of the most important habits of the mind is the wandering habit. It cannot stick to one point. It is like the wind.

If you carefully watch the wanderings of the mind you will discover that there is an intimate connection from one point to another though the mind wanders wildly about like an unchained monkey. The law of association operates always, though the links are broken. The mind may think of a book, then of the bookstall from where it was purchased, then of the friend met at the railway station while purchasing it, then of the railways and its directors who live in London.

The thought of London may bring in the idea of skating. From skating it may jump to the Alps. It may think of pine trees, health hospitals and open-air treatment. The thought of a pine tree will bring in the remembrance of Almora in India, and its vicinity where pine trees grow. The thought of Almora will bring in the thought of Swami Vivekananda who founded the Adwaita Ashram at Mayavati, near Almora. The mind may then entertain some divine ideas of concentration

and meditation and of Adwaita Brahman. Then suddenly it may drop into sensual grooves. It may think of the prostitutes in Almora. It will entertain lustful thoughts.

All these will take place within the twinkling of an eye. The mind works and moves with such tremendous speed that it is impossible to imagine. It catches one object and fabricates one idea and, through association, leaves this object and this idea and jumps to another object and another idea. There is a sort of concentration all throughout its wanderings though the concentration is not a continuous one.

When the thought runs in one definite groove continuously and on one subject alone, like the flow of oil from one vessel to another, then it is concentration. The aspirant should withdraw his mind whenever it runs outside and put it in the same groove, in the same line of thought, on one subject and on one idea. This is spiritual Sadhana. This is Yoga practice. This is concentration and meditation. This will result in Samadhi or the Superconscious State, the fourth dimension.

Sri Krishna describes in unambiguous terms the ways to check the wandering habits of the mind. The destruction of desires and control of the senses are the essential steps for the control of the mind. It is desire that makes the mind restless. The senses run after objects and the mind also follows the senses just as a dog follows its master. The rays of the mind get scattered in sensual objects. All the mental rays are dissipated in the acquisition, possession and enjoyment of sensual objects. In this way, man runs after the five kinds of sensual pleasures and has no rest even for a second. The mind runs in the sensual grooves in company with the five organs of knowledge and this little liva.

Therefore, if you want to check this wandering mind, you will have to renounce all sorts of desires and control the senses first. Then alone will you be successful in the

practice of concentration, meditation, will-culture, memory-culture and thought-culture.

I have come across several educated people during the course of my lecture tour of the United Provinces, Punjab, Kashmir and Andhra Desa. They asked me, "Dear Swamiji, how to concentrate and meditate? We have been practising meditation for the last twelve years, yet we have not found any improvement." The obvious reason is that they are not doing meditation in the right scientific manner. They have not purified themselves. They have not renounced all the desires of this world. They have not disciplined their minds. Without having all this preliminary training and discipline, they are trying to achieve the impossible, namely, concentration. How can this be possible? It is something like trying to tie an infuriated elephant with a slender piece of silken thread.

Mark carefully the words of Sri Krishna: "Abandoning without reserve all desires. Most of the aspirants keep some desires for their satisfaction. These desires lurk in the mind. Householders who practise concentration cannot leave some of their desires. They keep them for their secret gratification. Hence energy leaks and they do not get any success. They rise up five steps and suddenly fall from the spiritual ladder. Perfect dispassion is necessary for checking the wandering nature of the mind. The senses should be curbed "from all sides".

Mark the words: "from all sides". The control of one sense alone will not do. All the senses should be controlled from every side. This is also another vital point. As the practice is difficult and tedious you should not be discouraged. You will have to wait patiently for the results. Some people do the practice by fits and starts. They practise concentration for six hours daily for three months. When they, see that they have not obtained any tangible results in the shape of psychic powers, they give up the practice. This is very bad. Hence Sri Krishna says: "Little by little do the practice and be firm in it."

Practice consists in bringing the mind again and again back to the point and fixing or concentrating it on the point or Lakshya. Concentration means to converge the rays of the mind at one point. When the wandering mind becomes onepointed, that state is called Ekagrata. This is singlemindedness.

The subject of concentration is disgusting and tiring for the neophyte; but it is the most interesting and beneficial science in the world. When one advances in concentration, when one takes real interest in it, when one has realised some benefits, one cannot leave the practice. Such a practitioner cannot remain for a day without concentration. He becomes restless when he fails to have the practice. Concentration brings supreme joy, inner spiritual strength, unalloyed felicity and infinite, eternal peace. Concentration brings profound knowledge and deep inner sight, intuition and communion with God. It is the most wonderful science in the three worlds. I cannot adequately describe its marvellous benefits.

Concentration on a chair really means getting complete, detailed knowledge of the chair, its different parts, the particular wood out of which it is manufactured, such as rosewood, its workmanship or finish, its durability, its cost price, the degree of comfort it gives to the back and arms, whether the parts can be detached and fixed again, whether it is manufactured on modern lines and made bug-proof, what sort of polish or varnish is used to make it durable, and so on. When you concentrate on the chair, ideas like these occupy the mind. The mind generally wanders wildly at random. When it thinks of one object, in a second it leaves this object and runs like a monkey to another, then to a third one and so on. It cannot stick to one point.

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again by limiting its movements to a small circle in the beginning. That is the main aim. A time will come when the mind will stick to

one point alone. This is the fruit of your constant and protracted Sadhana. The joy will now be indescribable.

When you meditate on a chair, bring all the thoughts connected with the chair and dwell on these ideas. Do not allow any other thought connected with another object to enter the mind. There should be one line of thought. There should be one continuity of thought, like the steady flow of oil from one vessel to another, like the continuous sound of a church bell. There may be several ideas connected with one subject. This does not matter. You must reduce the number of ideas and come to one idea of one subject. When this idea also dies, you get entry into the state of Samadhi. When there is one idea, it is called Savikalpa Samadhi, which is a lower stage. When this one idea also dies out the mind becomes a blank or void. There is mental vacuity. This is the stage of thoughtlessness mentioned by Patanjali Maharshi in his Raja Yoga philosophy. You will have to rise above this blank modification and identify yourself fully with the Supreme Brahman, the silent witness of the mind, who gives power and light to this mind. Then and then alone can you reach the highest goal of life.

Back to the point. When you concentrate on a chair, do not allow any other thought of different objects to enter the mind. Again and again bring the mind to the object, which is the chair. When you meditate on a rose, think of the rose and the rose alone. When you think of a book, think of all the ideas connected with the book and nothing outside of it. When you think of a mountain or the ocean, think of the mountain and ocean alone. Exhaust all matters connected with the subject on hand. You can take any subject that is pleasing to the mind. Slowly you can take up any subject that is not pleasing to the mind by creating interest in it again and again.

You should always remember the maxim: "One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule as many can tell". When you take up any work, apply your whole heart, full mind and soul to it. Do it with perfect

concentration. What another can do in six hours, you can turn out within half an hour, smoothly and in a methodical and orderly manner. This is Yogic activity. You will now be taken for an accomplished Yogi.

Even when you study, study the subject with perfect concentration. Do not allow the mind to wander. You must shut out all external sounds. Fix the gaze on one point. Do not allow the eyes to wander. When you study a subject, do not think of coffee or sweetmeats or your friend. Such must be the nature of your concentration. It will come after some steady and constant endeavour. Be not troubled. Be not discouraged. There will be some delay. Wait coolly and patiently. Rome was not built in a day. It is all a question of time. Do not discontinue the practice even for a day, even when you are sick. In your failure lies the secret of your success and in your weakness lies the secret of your strength. Plod on. Push on. Gird up your loins. Nil desperandum. Be bold. March on courageously. Be cheerful. A brilliant future is awaiting you. Practise. Feel. Rejoice. Become a Yogi or a world figure. I can make you one. Follow me. Be sincere and earnest. Rise up. Awake. Thy light has come. O dear children of light and immortality! Brahmamuhurta is dawning now. It is 3.30a.m. This is the best time to practise concentration on the Atman and to catch hold of the mind. Sit in Virasana and do rigorous practice now.

May success and divine glory attend on thee! I shall take leave of you now. Melt the bubble mind in Brahman, the ocean of knowledge, and enjoy supreme bliss.

38

Extinction of Thoughts is Yoga

When a man is not attached to sense-objects or to actions, having renounced all thoughts, then he is said to have attained to Yoga.

(VI-4)

The world is merely an idea or thought. Just as a seed begins to germinate at its proper time and place, so also the seer appears as the visible manifestation through the thought of the mind, the visible being no other than the seer itself. When the mind ceases to think, the world vanishes and there is bliss indescribable. When the mind begins to think, immediately the world reappears and there is much suffering.

This universe is nothing but a mode of the mind, selfevolved from Brahman, the cause of the universe. All the universes, which appear only through the mind, are no other than its modes. Subjectively the mind is Consciousness and objectively it is this universe. Hence, this all-pervading world is nothing but Consciousness Itself.

This ever-restless mind, having come into existence out of the ineffable Brahman, creates the world according to its own thoughts. This legerdemain of the universe springs out of the mind's thought. It is through the thought in the mind that the universe appears to be, and this thought has to be given up by you if you wish to soar to the one Reality beyond the universe.

With the growth of a paltry thought there arises the universe; with the extinction of the former, the latter also disappears. With the annihilation of thought, all concept of difference between the seer and the seen vanish, and then the Reality begins to shine uninterrupted. Then the

shadow of the whole universe, both movable and immovable, is found in It in a non-dual state.

When thought increases prodigiously, it is in no way beneficial. It is for evil only. The cause of bondage is thought. It is the thought and desire which you generate that enmesh you as in a net. You become subject to bondage through your own thought and desire, like a silkworm in its cocoon. The thought in the mind is itself pain. Its absence is Brahmic bliss. Thought alone constitutes this worldly existence; its destruction leads to liberation.

Mark how one thought expands into many in a short time. Suppose you get the thought that you should organise a tea party for your friends. One thought of tea invites instantaneously the thoughts of sugar, milk, teacups, tables, chairs, napkins, spoons, sweetmeats, salted preparations and so on. So, this world is nothing but the expansion of thought. There is no such thing as a world independent and apart from thought. The expansion of thought towards objects is bondage. The renunciation of thought is liberation. The mind is strung with countless thoughts, like so many beads. If the string be cut to pieces, then you can infer what may happen to the illusory thoughts which are strung on the mind.

You must be very watchful and nip the thoughts in the bud. Then only will you be really happy. The mind plays tricks. You must understand its nature, ways and habits. Then only can you control it very easily.

The ideas of differentiating this person from that, this object from that, pertain to the mind only. Put an end to the mind with the sword of non-thought. Kill the soldier-thoughts one by one when they emerge out of the fort of the mind. Eventually, you can get hold of the fortress of the mind.

If you can bring about the extinction of all sorts of imagination and thought, like stormy gales dispersing thick clouds, the mind will get absorbed in its source-in

Absolute Consciousness. Then you will be free from all sorts of tribulations, worries and miseries. Then only will you enjoy perennial happiness and possess the wealth of liberation.

The mind is Maya. If it runs towards sensual objects wildly, Maya takes a stronghold of the man. Maya havocs through the mind. This lower impulsive mind drags you down into all kinds of petty sensual enjoyments and deludes you in a variety of ways. Maya, through her illusive power, raises millions of thoughts in the mind. Hence the Jiva becomes a prey to such thoughts.

This lower mind cannot approach those who have a strong power of discrimination between the Real and the unreal. Maya is very easy to be detected and the Self can be easily realised by those who possess discrimination and strong determination. Through the power of the will and discrimination the mind can be controlled.

Slay the lower mind which is the enemy of the Atman. Do this with the help of the higher and Sattwic mind. Use your discrimination, pure reason and spirit of enquiry constantly when objects trouble you and try to delude you. Again and again exercise your reason, till you are established in the higher divine knowledge. The power of ignorance is great indeed.

Renounce desires. Renounce the thoughts of objects. Cultivate dispassion. Give up this little, false "I". All the thoughts encircle and envelop this "I". Do not pay much attention to the needs of the body. Think of the body and its wants as little as possible. This will enable you to think more of God.

Have no thoughts. The fluctuating mind will then die by itself. It will melt in Brahman. Then you will have the beatific vision of Brahman. When the mind dies, then "1", "you" and "this", time, space and Jiva all dwindle into nothing. The idea of inside and outside will also vanish completely. There will be only a single experience

of the one indivisible and all-full Brahman. All doubts and delusions will disappear through knowledge.

You may perform austerities for myriads of years; you may be able to travel at once through the three worlds; but you will not be able to reach the stainless shore of liberation except through the firm path of annihilation of thoughts. Therefore, endeavour to destroy this thought-process and attain thereby the Brahmic bliss which is devoid of heterogeneity and pain.

It is only thought destroyed beyond resurrection that constitutes the immaculate Brahmic seat. Why can you not contemplate silently and secretly in your heart upon the destruction of this thought-process? Then it will so betide that even the throne of an emperor, who sways his sceptre over the whole earth, will be regarded by you as but a paltry bauble.

Remain without thoughts and desires. Divest yourself of all thoughts. This is the state of Brahma-Nishtha-establishment in Brahman. Strive to attain this state. You will then enjoy perfect peace and joy.

The mind can very easily think of worldly objects. This is its nature. Thoughts generally flow with ease towards objects. The mental energy readily flows in that direction. The mental force can easily flow in the old grooves and avenues of mundane thoughts. But the mind finds it difficult to think of God. It is an uphill work for a worldly mind to fix itself on God. The difficulty in weaning the mind away from objects and fixing it on God is the same as trying to make the Ganges flow towards Badrinarayan instead of its natural flow towards the ocean. It is like rowing against the current of the Jamuna river. Nevertheless, through strenuous effort and renunciation it must be trained to flow towards God, much against its will, if you wish to free yourself from birth and death. There is no other way if you want to escape from worldly miseries and tribulations.

Destroy the stains of thought through discrimination and constant effort and get drowned in the ocean of Brahmic bliss.

When you try to bury your shadow in the earth, it always reappears. So also, when you try to destroy thoughts through discrimination, they will reappear again and again. Withdraw the mind from the objects and act according to the instructions of your Guru. Purify the mind and fix it in the heart. The mind will then be destroyed in course of time. This is certain.

Do not for a moment contemplate upon the things of the world. You need not exert too much to rid yourself of this thought-process. With the checking of all thoughts, one's mind will perish. To crush a full-blown flower in one's hand requires a little effort only, but even this little effort is not needed to do away with the mind. If you destroy the impure mind through the pure mind, you will rest firmly in your own essential Self.

When you are established in the idea that the world is unreal, then the tossing of the mind, brought about by thoughts, will vanish slowly.

Repeat the following formula daily: "Brahma satyam jagat mithya, jeevo Brahmaiva na aparah—Brahman alone is real; the world is unreal; the Jiva is identical with Brahman". You will gain immense strength and peace of mind through the repetition of this formula.

Having freed yourself from all desire for the visible objects appearing before you and, having made your impure mind firm and steady through the power of your pure mind, eradicate all thoughts that arise in the mind. This mind, which exists because of thoughts, will then perish.

With the extinction of base thoughts there will be the extinction of ignorance and its effect, the mind. Thoughts generate pain. The state of thoughtlessness confers bliss. Sit alone in a solitary room and close your eyes. Watch the mind and destroy the thought-forms that arise one

by one by means of your continuous and energetic efforts. Then Samadhi will ensue.

If, with the extinction of the pain-producing thoughts, the mind is also destroyed, then the thick forest of delusion that has been affecting you from the remote past, will dissipate itself. Then, like an unobscured sky in the autumnal season, Brahman alone will shine resplendent, blissful, imperishable, non-dual, formless and without birth and death.

When all your thoughts, which are now dispersed, are collected together and you remain in a state of repose, then the eternally blissful Atman will shine forth as the reflection of the sun seen on the clear surface of the water.

Peace is not to be had in money, in the opposite sex or in eating. When the mind becomes desireless and thoughtless, the Atman shines and sheds forth eternal bliss and peace. Why then do you search in vain for happiness in the objects outside? Search within for the supreme bliss in the subjective Satchidananda Brahman.

39

Pleasure is the Source of Pain

The pleasures that are born of contact with objects are truly the womb of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Kaunteya! The wise do not rejoice in them.

(V-22)

Pleasure is the womb of pain. Pleasure is the cause of pain. If you do not want pain then give up pleasure. If you do not want death, then give up birth.

You cannot have pleasure without pain. Wherever there is pleasure, there is pain also. You seek vainly for pleasure in gold, in the opposite sex and in this mundane existence. You cannot have absolute happiness on a relative physical plane of the pairs of opposites. The pairs of opposites rotate in their turn. Death follows life; night follows day; pain follows pleasure.

Pleasure is simply the titillation of the nerves. It is due to the play of nerves. It is the irritation of the nerves. When you scratch the skin, redness is produced because the nerves are irritated and a large quantity of blood is drawn towards the irritated part. When you take a cold bath in summer, the blood vessels of the skin contract and all the blood is sent to the heart. Hence there arises a feeling of exhilaration of spirit. When you take a hot bath, the blood from within is drawn to the skin or periphery. You perspire profusely. It brings about a depression of spirit after some time. When a sex-impulse travels from the brain to the reproductive system, the nerves of the generative organ are irritated and blood flows profusely to that area on account of the irritation of the nerves. When you think deeply, more blood is drawn to the brain. Sudden fear drains blood away from the brain and the

heart and you get a confused state of mind and collapse of the heart takes place.

All this is a play of the nerves, coupled with centralisation of blood in a particular area. The pleasure that you derive through the senses is due to nerve-irritation. This is not real happiness at all. If you call this pleasure, you will have to take the sensation caused by scratching of the groins owing to ringworm patches also as very great pleasure.

Sensual pleasure lasts for a few seconds only. As long as there is a piece of sweetmeat in the mouth, there is some pleasant sensation. As long as there is the contact of the sounds of melodious music with the ears, so long there is some pleasant feeling within. Sexual pleasure lasts for a few seconds only.

Sensual pleasure is tantalising. There is enchantment only as long as a person does not possess the object. He exerts hard. His mind is full of anxiety. He is under despondency as to whether he will secure the object or not. The moment he is in possession of the object, the charm vanishes. He finds that he is entangled.

The bachelor thinks of his marriage day and night. But after his marriage he feels that he is imprisoned. He is not able to satisfy the extravagant wants of his wife. He likes to run away from his home into the forest. A rich but childless man thinks that he will be happier by getting a son. He worries himself day and night to get a son. He goes on pilgrimages to holy places like Rameswaram and performs various religious ceremonies. But when he does get a son he feels miserable. The child suffers from epileptic fits and his entire wealth is spent on the doctors. There is no cure.

You are constantly endeavouring to possess something which you have not. When you cannot get the object, you feel miserable. The man who is addicted to tea, who is in the habit of taking fruit after meals, feels

very miserable when he cannot get tea or fruit in a place. He admonishes his wife and servants without any rhyme or reason, out of irritability. When the wife dies, the husband gets drowned in sorrow, not because of the loss of his loving partner in life, but because he cannot now get sexual pleasure.

Pain manifests itself when there is absence of pleasure. There cannot be any pain without a previous experience of pleasure. The man who has been all along sleeping on a soft bed will experience pain if he sleeps on a rough bed one day. He remembers the pleasure that he derived from the soft bed when he sleeps on a coarse one. The man who is in the habit of sleeping on a coarse bed will never get any pain by sleeping on such a bed. The pain manifests only along with the mind's remembrance of pleasure. The cause of pain is pleasure. The cause of death is love of sensual life. Give up sensual pleasures if you want to be free from pain. Give up sensual life if you do not want death.

There is a grain of pleasure in objects but the pain that is mixed with it is of the size of a mountain. Pleasure is mixed with fear, pain, anxiety, sin and exertion. One cent of pleasure is mixed with a thousand cents of pain. Pleasure that is mixed with pain is no pleasure at all.

The same object that gives you pleasure also gives you pain. Though there is pleasure in copulation, exhaustion and weakness follow the act. So you will have to weigh carefully the advantages and disadvantages that you derive from the possession and enjoyment of objects, and select from them only those which give you the maximum of pleasure and a minimum of pain. This is the work of the intellect.

That man in whom right reason has developed will be able to discriminate and enjoy peace and bliss. The common run of people go wildly after each and every object and are swayed by emotions, passions, impulses and low appetites. Their position is extremely deplorable

indeed. They are driven hither and thither by petty likes and dislikes. Their position is in no way better than that of a piece of straw that is tossed about hither and thither by the wind.

Many rich persons, in spite of their immense wealth and possession of two or three wives, are extremely miserable and unhappy. I have come into contact with several such rich landlords. They are all discontented, restless, peevish and extremely miserable. It is evident, therefore, that happiness does not lie in money, objects and in the opposite sex. Only he who has controlled his mind can be happy. "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown".

Wherever there is pleasure, there you will find pain, anger and attachment. You derive great pain from fear of losing the pleasurable objects. The fear worries you constantly. On this score, a philosopher and an aspirant ruthlessly shun all sorts of illusive mundane pleasures. There are no pleasures at all to a discriminating mind. Pain appears as pleasure owing to your delusion. You get more pain from craving. It constantly worries and torments you. If you have once tasted pleasure, the craving remains for ever. It troubles you greatly.

In old age there is intense agony. The longing and desire are there. The old man has not the strength to satisfy his desires. He has no teeth but there is the longing to eat hard stuffs. Somehow he manages in a way by soaking the articles in water or milk. But this does not give him complete satisfaction. The pain is there in the mind. He thinks again and again of his old days of boyhood and juvenile vigour and sobs heavily.

It is on account of craving and fear that a philosopher shuns all worldly objects. But dull worldlings rush headlong and impetuously after objects without an iota of thought. The world affords pleasure to a thoughtless man, but to a man of enquiry the same world is a ball of fire. The latter will try his level best to get

rid of all worldly desires. The satisfaction of a desire does not come by enjoyment of the objects of desire. On the contrary, the desires get aggravated like the fire into which Ghee has been poured. It is by renunciation of desires alone that satisfaction and peace result.

Owing to delusion pain appears as pleasure to the worldlings. But a man of discrimination shuns all worldly objects ruthlessly. Raja Bhartrihari, Raja Gopichand and Buddha deserted their kingdoms and all pleasurable objects, music, palaces, children and wives in order to attain the bliss of the Atman which is everlasting. They attained immortality. They were not fools. Had there been real happiness in objects they would have remained in the world.

Worldly people struggle hard to get more and more pleasures by increasing their wants and comforts and trying to increase their earning capacity. In the end they get more and more entangled. They do not find pleasure in sensual objects. On the contrary, they experience more and more pain.

If you develop the power of endurance, if you train yourself to rejoice in suffering, if you think that everything is done by God for one's own betterment and uplift, if you welcome pain as a messenger of God to make you remember Him and to infuse in you more mercy and the power of endurance, you will enjoy constant, perennial bliss even amidst great suffering and calamity. Then pain will not be pain any more. Suffering will not be suffering any more. There will be no necessity for selfish worldly struggles for accumulating wealth and acquiring name and fame. Greed, hatred and turmoil will then disappear completely. You will be free from all pain and suffering. You will forever rest in the everlasting peace and bliss within. You will rejoice within. This is not the philosophy of the stoics. This is not the teaching of the pessimists. This is wonderful optimism that goads you on to realise the deep, abiding eternal joy and unruffled peace of the Self within.

40

Extinguish the Fire of Desire

Enveloped, O son of kunti, is wisdom by this constant enemy of the wise in the form of desire, which is unappeasable as the fire!

(III-39)

The cause of all actions is desire. A desire crops up in your mind for an object. Then you exert to possess the object. Desire is the motive power that keeps up the continuance of life. Desire is an offspring of ignorance. By annihilating ignorance and attaining the Self, you can destroy all sorts of desires. Desire is the real fetter that binds a man to this world. When all desires are rent asunder by the dawn of knowledge of the Self, there is salvation from the bondage of worldly existence.

The mind plays havoc through desires. As soon as a desire arises, you think that you will get happiness by its fulfilment. You exert to achieve the desired object. As soon as you get it, a little satisfaction, a little gratification is experienced for a short time. Once again the mind becomes restless and agitated. It wants new sensations. Disgust and dissatisfaction come in. Again it wants some new objects for its enjoyment. That is the reason why this world is termed as mere imagination by the Vedantins. They look upon everything as unreal.

Desires are innumerable, insatiable and unconquerable. Enjoyment cannot bring satisfaction. It is a mistake to think so. Enjoyment only fans a desire. It is like pouring Ghee in the fire. Enjoyment strengthens increases and aggravates a desire.

See the fate of Raja Yayati of yore. He borrowed the youthful state from his son to have sexual enjoyment for thousands of years. At last he cried out in his old age

with bitterness, "Alas! what a fool I am! Still my sexual desires are waxing. There is no end to desire. I have wasted my life. O God! have mercy on me. Lift me up from this mire of worldly existence". This story appears in the *Mahabharata*.

A man at Darjeeling thinks that Mussoorie is a better place; the Mussoorie man vainly imagines that Nainital is a better place. It is all a trick of the mind. Distance lends enchantment to the view. Wherever you go, you have the same sky, the same earth, the same five elements and the same passions. Rest in peace at one place and think of God.

You can go wherever you like-to Gulmarg or Pahalgam in Kashmir, to Darjeeling or Simla in the Himalayas, to Vienna or the Alps in the continent of Europe-you will not find any real rest. The charming scenery may soothe the retina for a second, but attraction, repulsion, jealousy, passion and greed are everywhere. And you carry the same mind with you wherever you go. Imagination and change of place have deceived many. So be contented. Live wherever you like. Discipline the mind and the senses. Meditate on the inner Self ceaselessly. Here you will find everlasting peace. The mind will stop deceiving you now.

In this ocean of worldly existence, desires are like crocodiles. Kill them as soon as they arise on the surface of the mind. Do not yield to them. Do not become despondent under your trials. Make friendship with the pure, Sattwic mind and destroy the impure mind with the help of the pure mind. Make your mind rest in the blissful Atman. Desires should be crushed the very moment they arise in the mind, by discrimination and dauntless, indefatigable effort.

Whenever a desire arises in the mind consult your power of discrimination at once. Your discrimination will tell you immediately that it is attended by pain, that it is only a vain temptation set up by the mind, and that

dispassion and renunciation alone can bring about satisfaction and peace of mind. It will advise you to renounce the desire immediately and to take to the study of the Upanishads and repetition of Om. It will advise you to have absorption in Samadhi in a solitary place on the banks of the sacred Ganges. Think deeply again and again whether the new desire will give you more happiness or more spiritual gain. Discrimination will guide you to take up the help of the will and drive away the desire immediately. Discrimination and will are the two potent weapons for an aspirant on the path of Jnana Yoga to destroy evil and temptation and remove all major and minor impediments.

Just as you starve a plant by depriving it of water, so also you can starve out obnoxious desires by not allowing the mind to dwell upon such desires. You have no desire for a thing till you know what it is like. It is only after you have seen it or heard of it or touched it that you get a longing for it. Therefore, the best principle for a man is not to take, touch or see anything that is likely to taint the imagination. You will have to turn aside the attention resolutely, and particularly the imagination, from the subject. In course of time all objectionable desires will die out.

Even after you have renounced all desires, there may remain in the mind some subtle, hidden desires that cannot be comprehended. These are very dangerous ones. Therefore, you will have to be very, very careful. The lurking undercurrent of desires will throw you down at any moment if you are not very vigilant and cautious. They will destroy your dispassion and bring about your downfall eventually. I have witnessed many who have fallen from Yoga due to the overpowering influence of these subtle, hidden desires. As long as you have these subtle, hidden, unnoticeable desires in your mind, you can never dream of entering into Nirvikalpa Samadhi. You can never develop supreme dispassion also.

You may become old and your hair may turn grey, but your mind will be ever young. The capacity may vanish, but the craving will remain even when you have reached advanced senility. Cravings are the real seeds of birth. These cravingseeds give rise to thought and action. The wheel of worldly existence is kept revolving by these cravings. Nip them in the bud. Then only will you be safe. You will get liberation. The constant meditation on Brahman and the repetition of Om and devotion to the Lord will root out these craving-seeds which lie deep within. You will have to dig them out properly from the various corners and burn them beyond resurrection. Then only will your efforts bear the fruit of Samadhi.

When a desire arises in the mind, a worldling welcomes it and tries to fulfil it. But an aspirant renounces it immediately through discrimination. Wise people consider even a spark of desire as a very great evil. Therefore, they will not entertain any kind of desire. They remain ever delighted in the Atman only.

A desire arises in the mind. There is now a thought-wave. This thought-wave agitates your mind till you get satisfaction through enjoyment of the desired object. There is peace or happiness after the enjoyment is over. Now another desire arises in the mind. During the interval between the gratification of one desire and the manifestation of another, there is pure bliss, because there is no mind then. The mind is at rest. You are now in union with Brahman. This state of pure bliss between two desires is the state of God-consciousness, the state of oneness with Brahman. If you can prolong this period of bliss through intense and protracted Sadhana, by keeping up the idea that you are Brahman, and by not allowing another thought-wave or desire to manifest, you will be in the state of Samadhi or union with Brahman.

41

Peace Flows From Desirelessness

That man attains peace who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, without the sense of mine and without egoism.

(II-71)

Every man in the world is restless and is striving after something; what, he does not know. He feels he is in want of something, the nature of which he does not exactly comprehend. He seeks in the accomplishment of ambitious projects the rest that he feels he is in need of. But he finds that worldly greatness, when secured, is a delusion and a snare; he doubtless does not find any happiness or peace in it. He gets degrees, diplomas, titles, honour, power, name and fame; he marries; he begets children; in short, he gets all that he supposes would give him happiness. But he finds no rest. Pious men, saints and sages declare that this restlessness of every man, this state of discontent, uncomfortableness and dissatisfaction of being ill at ease with himself and his surroundings is due to the loss of the companionship of his Soul.

Rich people possess immense wealth. They have all sorts of comforts, easy circumstances and easy-going life. They have decent motor cars and beautiful bungalows. They take dainties and palatable dishes and go to hill-stations during summer. And yet they have no peace of mind because they have no inner harmony. There is discord in their hearts on account of their greed, selfishness, egoism, lust, pride, fear, hatred, anger and worry. Outward harmony and quietness cannot give you real peace of mind.

The peace of God is an internal state. You can have it without the help of money and outwardly favourable circumstances. You may have sorrows and yet you may enjoy the inward harmony and peace if you constantly rest in God by withdrawing the senses, by stilling the mind and eradicating its impurities. Lord Jesus was persecuted in a variety of ways. He was put to death on the cross and yet, what did he say? He said, "O Lord, forgive them. They know not what they are doing". How peaceful he was even when his life was at stake! He was enjoying the inner peace. No tribulation or calamity could touch him.

Peace is absolute serenity and tranquillity, wherein all the mental modifications, thoughts, imaginations, whims, fancies, moods, impulses, emotions and instincts cease entirely and the individual soul rests in its own native pristine glory in an unruffled state. It is not the temporary condition of mental quietude which people speak of in common parlance when they retire for a short time to a solitary bungalow in a forest for a little rest when they are tired after a long journey. Peace is the fourth condition of Superconsciousness. Peace is the realm of infinite bliss where cares, worries, anxieties and fears, which torment the soul, dare not enter. It is the realm of eternal sunshine where all distinctions of caste, creed and colour disappear in the warm embrace of divine love, and where desires and cravings find their full satiety. Peace is eternal life in the pure Spirit, in the highest Self.

Peace is within. Search for it within the chambers of your heart through one-pointed concentration and meditation. If you do not find peace there, you will not find it anywhere else.

Peace can be found only within. You certainly cannot find it in external objects. Look within. Sit silently in a room from half an hour to one hour. Close your eyes. Relax the muscles and nerves. Concentrate at the space between the eyebrows. Withdraw the senses and the

mind from external objects. Forget the body and the world. Meditate regularly in the early morning hours. Enter into the great calm or the secret place of the Most High.

The thirst for objects is the greatest enemy of peace. Desire causes distraction of various sorts. There cannot be an iota or tinge of happiness for a man who is thirsting for sensual objects. The mind will be ever restless and hanker after the objects. When this thirst dies, man enjoys peace. Only such a person can meditate and rest in the Self.

Give up desire, craving, longing, egoism and "mine"-ness. You will get peace. The peace of the Eternal lies very close to those who know themselves, who are disjoined from desire and passion, who are of subdued nature and thought. The man who is endowed with supreme faith and who has mastery over his senses gets supreme peace quickly.

If you wish to enter into the great peace of God, all worldly desires must die, all the senses should be brought under your perfect control and the mind should be stilled. Peace is in that man who has given up "mine"-ness and "I"-ness, who has given up cravings, desires and longing for objects. That man alone will have peace. Peace is not in a bungalow in a forest. Peace can be enjoyed only by him who has dispassion, who has understood the magnitude of human suffering here, who knows the real value of this earth, which is composed of the five elements, colours and sounds. Peace can be had only by the man who has understood the worthlessness of the perishable objects and the passing powers and positions in this world and has no desire for them. The world is nothing to a man of discrimination. He who has found out the real worth of this world, who yearns for liberation, who has understood that beyond the names and forms there is one eternal, everlasting Atman, and who practises self-discipline—he alone can have peace. Such a man is the King of kings, not he who is simply

carried away by a little colour, by a little touch and a little nerve titillation. He is forever miserable who has no discrimination and dispassion, who does not discriminate between the Eternal and the non-Eternal, between the Real and the unreal. To a man of enquiry the world is nothing more than a little bit of sensation and titillation of the nerves. Therefore, develop the spirit of enquiry, discrimination and dispassion. Dispassion is a mental state. The man who has dispassion is the strongest man. He has inner spiritual strength born of dispassion. He is the most peaceful man. Dispassion is real spiritual wealth because it opens the door of intuition, the door of Brahman, where you will get eternal sunshine, everlasting peace and bliss.

If you annihilate selfishness, greed and egoism, Nature will work for you. You will have to co-operate with Nature, then Nature will carry your burden of life on its head. You can now remain quite at ease. You will be free from cares, worries, anxieties, responsibilities and fears. The individual will will become one with the Cosmic Will. Your aim will become one with that of the Cosmic. Then there will be no obstacles or impediments in your way. Whosoever makes a surrender of his selfish aims and interests to the Will of the Lord will enjoy supreme peace and perennial bliss.

42

The Attributeless Brahman

Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the Unmanifested, for the goal, the Unmanifested, is very hard for the embodied to reach.

(XII-5)

The *Prasna, Tapaniya* and *Kathavalli Upanishads* elaborately treat of the methods of contemplation on Brahman as devoid of qualities. Sri Badarayana, in a chapter of the *Brahma Sutras,* which deals with the nature of the qualities of Brahman, mentions positive attributes like "joyful" and "intelligent" as well as negative attributes like "measure-less" and "colourless". Both kinds of attributes are mentioned with reference to the Absolute; yet, the contemplation on such a Brahman can be called Nirguna or meditation on the attributeless Brahman. The fundamental distinction between contemplation of the conditioned or Saguna Brahman and the unconditioned or Nirguna Brahman is that in the former the devotee looks upon Brahman as really connected with those attributes, while in the latter the positive and negative qualities are not viewed as essentially connected with Brahman, but as suggesting Its absolute nature. That is to say, "joyful" and the like do not enter into the essence of the Brahman contemplated upon but act as a gateway for grasping Its true nature. In the contemplation on the conditioned Brahman, those and similar other properties form a part of the contemplation.

By Nirguna, it does not mean that Brahman is a negative concept, that It is a non-entity or zero. It means that the qualities found here in limitation are found illimitably in Brahman. It means that the attributes are

the essential nature of Brahman. It means that Brahman does not possess the perishable qualities of matter like the blue colour of a cloth, but possesses all the auspicious qualities. Brahman is without attributes too. So also, by Nirakara, it does not mean that Brahman is formless. It means that He has not a limited form as that of objects but has a form unimaginable. What form can you attribute to Infinity?

Many possess a crude idea of Brahman. They say that Brahman is a block of stone because He has no form, no qualities. They say that He is a regular void, a zero. No, no. They are entirely mistaken. They have not studied the infallible Upanishads, which are the right means of knowledge, the right source of wisdom, which give an accurate knowledge of Brahman. The Upanishads are infallible because they appeal to the reason of every thinker, every philosopher. They tally with the experiences of realisation. Hence they are infallible. Their authority is more valid than that of perception and inference. The ill-formed critics have not had Satsanga with sages. They have various doubts. They have a gross mind which is unfit for philosophical investigation, discrimination, reflection and ratiocination. Brahman is extremely subtle. He is finer than the thousandth part of a point of hair divided into a thousand parts. A subtle, calm, pure, one-pointed and clear intellect is needed to understand Brahman and meditate on It. The ignorant critics suffer from doubts regarding the validity of the Upanishads and the true nature of Brahman. They should purify the mind by means of selfless service and study of the Upanishads. They should develop the four qualifications and have constant Satsang with educated, practical Sannyasins. Then they will have intellectual conviction and also an intellectual grasp of Brahman. By hearing, reflection and contemplation they can reach Brahman. This is the royal road.

So, Brahman is full of auspicious Gunas. He is a lump of luminosity. He is a solid mass of knowledge. He is pure awareness. He is really more solid than the Himalayas. Knowledge is heavier and more concrete than a huge block of stone.

In Saguna meditation the devotee considers himself as entirely different from the object of worship. The worshipper makes a total, unreserved, ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord. He respects, honours and adores the Lord and depends on Him for everything—for food, for protection and for his very existence. For every sort of help he always looks to his Deity. There is nothing independent for him. He is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. His hands, legs, senses, mind, intellect and physical body belong to the Lord. A devotee does not at all like the idea of Jnana or merging. He likes to have his separate entity as a servant, and likes to serve, worship and love the Lord always. He does not like to become sugar (as in the case of the Adwaitin), but likes to taste and eat sugar. This method of worship is one of contraction.

Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You have to contract yourself to a point and merge in the circumference. This is the path of devotion or Saguna meditation. This is suitable for people of emotional temperament. The vast majority are fit for this line of worship only.

In Nirguna meditation the aspirant takes himself to be Brahman. He denies and sublates all the false adjuncts or fictitious entities like egoism, mind and body. He depends upon himself alone. He possesses self-reliance. He asserts boldly. He reflects, discriminates, investigates, reasons out and meditates on the Self. He does not want to taste sugar but wishes to become a solid mass of sugar itself. He wants to merge in the Absolute. He likes to be identical with Brahman. This method is one of expansion of the lower self.

Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You expand by Sadhana to such a very great extent that you occupy the whole circle and envelop the circumference. This method of meditation is suitable for persons of fine intellect, bold understanding, strong and accurate reasoning power and a powerful will. Only a microscopic minority are fit for this line of meditation.

It is comparatively easy to meditate on "Aham Brahma Asmi" when you are seated in a steady posture in a solitary, closed room; but it is very, very difficult to keep up this feeling amidst crowded surroundings while the body moves. If you meditate for one hour and feel that you are the Atman, and if you feel for the remaining twenty-three hours that you are the body, the Sadhana is perfectly useless and will not produce the desired result. So, at all times you should try to keep up the idea that you are Brahman. This is very, very important. You must keep the mind fully occupied with this one thought. A worldly mind needs a thorough overhaul and a complete psychological transformation. This method of practice brings about the construction of a new mind and a new mode of thought. A contemplative life is diametrically opposite to worldly life. It is an entire change altogether. The old impressions of sense-objects have to be thoroughly annihilated through constant and intense practices carried on with zeal for a long time until new spiritual impressions have been formed.

43

The Practice of Equal Vision

Sages look with an equal eye on a Brahmin endowed with learning and humility, on a cow, on an elephant, and even on a dog and an outcaste.

(V-18)

God will test the aspirants to see whether they see Him in all beings-in dogs and horses, in snakes and scorpions, in outcastes and Brahmins. Nowadays there are numerous aspirants who will not give even a drop of water to a thirsty man. They will pose as great devotees and shout: "Hey Krishna", "Hey Rama". If they cannot serve and love the living God, how then can they serve and love the unseen Lord?

Namdev was tested. Lord Vittala of Pandharpur assumed the form of a dog and appeared before him. It was a marvellous instance when a Bhakta exhibited his true devotion to the Lord. You all know the story how the dog snatched a piece of bread from Namdev. Namdev ran after the dog, saying, "O Lord! please do not run away. Kindly let me put some *ghee* on the bread so that your throat might not get hurt."

Sri Sankara was also tested. He had a little egoism of caste. He was a Brahmin by birth. Lord Shiva assumed the form of a low-caste Harijan and appeared before Sankara. Sankara did not like to tread the same path trodden by the Harijan. Then the Harijan asked, "O Sankara! you are a great Adwaitic philosopher. Where is your equal vision now? Where is your Vedanta or oneness of life? You are showing dislike to me as I am a low-caste person. You still have the Brahmin-ego. Where is your Adwaita philosophy now? Does your body contain

more elements than mine? Does your Atman differ from my Atman?"

Sri Sankara was really ashamed. He at once recognised that the outcaste was not really an outcaste. He reflected: "This person cannot talk such lofty philosophy if he were an outcaste. It is only Lord Shiva who has come here to test me. I still have some traces of caste egoism." He at once prostrated before the outcaste and touched his feet. Immediately the outcaste assumed the form of Lord Shiva.

The state of equal vision is much misunderstood. Equal vision is with reference to the one common Consciousness or Atman in all beings. Giving apples or grapes to pigs is not equal vision. The pigs will not like them. They like only their own delicious food. A Jivanmukta who has equal vision will not embrace all women who pass along the road, saying, "I have equal vision in man and woman." He will not walk on his head, saying, "I have equal vision in my legs and head." He will not eat faecal matter, saying, "I have equal vision in rice and faecal matter." He will not eat through the anus, saying, "I have equal vision in the anus and mouth."

The body is mistaken for the Atman and licentiousness is practised in the name of Vedantic equal vision by people of small understanding.

The *Sruti* declares: "He who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, shrinks not from anything thereafter. He who sees the one Atman or the Supreme Self in all beings, how can there be delusion or grief for him? How can he be afraid of anything?"

The *Gita* also says: "The self, harmonised by Yoga, sees the Atman in all beings and all beings in the Self; everywhere he sees the same".

You can have the Adwaitic feeling but you cannot have oneness in action. If there are three litres of milk and if there are twenty inmates in an Ashram, the three litres should be given to the six sick persons only.

The devotee feels that the world is a manifestation of the Lord and that all movements and actions are His Lilas. He has no repugnance or dislike for faecal matter and dirt, and for an outcaste, scavenger, cobbler, beggar, prostitute and thief. He says, "I see everywhere my sweet Lord. It is Hari who is playing the part of the prostitute, thief, dacoit and scavenger." He has an exalted, all-embracing, all-inclusive, mental state. This cannot be adequately described in words. It has to be felt. Mira, Cauranga, Hafiz, Tulsidas, Kabir and Ramdas enjoyed this state. Tulsidas says: "Know everything as Sita and Ram, and with folded hands do salutations to all, to everything".

In the Purusha Sukta you will find a description of the Purusha: "With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere, He exists in the world, enveloping all".

Lord Krishna gives advice to Uddhava and prescribes an easy method of realising Him: "Know, Uddhava, that the Brahmin, the outcaste, the ass, the dog, the king, the beggar are all My forms. When you meet any object, do prostration and feel My Presence in it".

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa prostrated before an outcaste girl and said, "O Mother Kali! I see Thee in this girl."

Pavahari Baba followed a thief who had come to steal from him. He ran after him with a bag of vessels and addressed him thus, "O thief Narayana! pray, accept these things. I never knew that you were in my cottage."

Ekanath, a Maharashtra Bhakta, gave his ring voluntarily to a thief when the latter entered the house. He said to the thief, "O thief! take this ring also. Your duty is to steal things. Thou art Vittala. Keep up this play of yours."

Have you understood the sublime state of these exalted Bhaktas who had a new angle of vision? This

state will come to you one day. Exert. Struggle. Pray. Worship. Meditate. Plunge yourself in Bhajan with zeal, earnestness and fervour.

The practice of the Presence of God always is the easiest, quickest and surest way of reaching God-consciousness. Feel His Presence always and everywhere. Feel His indwelling Presence in everything—in flowers, trees, dogs, horses, human beings, stars, sun, moon and in the five elements. Feel that you think, feel, cogitate, know, wish, talk, write and walk because of His Grace only. Feel His Presence in all movements. Feel your oneness with everything. You are sad and depressed because you have failed or forgotten to feel His Presence.

He never talks or smiles but His Presence is sufficient for me. I am always in joy, in bliss, in knowledge and immortality in His Presence. This kind of Sadhana eventually leads to resting in the attributeless, formless Brahman. All forms vanish.

When you feel His Presence always, everywhere and in everything, then the ideas of good and bad, the idea of sex totally disappear. Every food then becomes Sattwic and holy. When you are amongst children, feel that you are one with them. When you are in the midst of women, be one with them. When you are seated on a block of stone, be one with the stone. This is cosmic identification. All is good, all is sacred because Shiva dwells in all. This practice will give the bliss of oneness, the bliss of "all"-ness.

Many Vedantic practitioners fail in their endeavours to realise the Self despite their long years of practice. The students of the path of Jnana Yoga should take up this practice of the Presence of God first. It will eventually end in the "Aham Brahma Asmi" realisation. Para Bhakti is pure Jnana only.

The toy elephant made of wood hides the reality of "wood" when you take it for an elephant. Even so, these

names and forms conceal the reality "Brahman" behind them. Get rid of the illusion in the mind that is deep-rooted from beginningless time. The toy elephant is wood only; it is not an elephant. So also, this is Brahman and not the world. This is the Atman and not the body. Take the essence that is true after throwing off the false thing, namely, the elephant, world and body.

Duality is the very nature of the mind. It can never think in terms of unity. It is through the purity of the mind that it can be trained to think in terms of unity.

Clay is the only reality in all the three periods of time. The pot is an unreal thing. The Chhandogya Upanishad says: "Clay only is the reality. The modifications such as jar and pot are in speech only, like ornaments". Similarly, Brahman is the only Reality, the eternal Substance which has no beginning, no end, no change. The modifications—body, mind, senses and world—are totally false. They are in name only. See the clay in all earthenware vessels. See the Atman in all objects.

Cows are different. They differ in colour and various other particulars. But the milk from them is the same. Man minus the customs, manners, modes of dress and eating, is the same throughout the world. His passions and feelings are the same throughout the world. The languages are different in various districts and climes, but the idea behind all languages is the same. This is oneness behind variety, duality and multiplicity.

There is one essence or one feeling in deep sleep. All feel alike. There is no plurality in sleep. Similarly, there is one homogeneous substance behind the objects. This is the Atman. This is your real Self.

The coconut made of sugar is sugar only. It has marks, lines, external shell, ridges, eyes and everything. But you have the inner feeling in the mind that it is only sugar. Similarly, even though you see the different objects of the universe, you must have the feeling that it

is the Atman that is at the bottom of all the objects, and that the Atman is the ultimate Reality and essence of everything.

Why do you look into the leaves, twigs, flowers and fruit of the mango tree? Look into the source, the seed. The cloth is only cotton and thread. Take the cloth as cotton only. In a similar manner, take the world as Atman only.

When you see any person or object, think and feel that he or it is Narayana. By incessant practice the name and form will vanish. The Atman alone will shine. The world-idea will vanish. It takes a long time. It demands strenuous efforts. You will see and feel the Atman or Narayana only everywhere. During the practice your old impressions will trouble you. They are your real enemies. Fight against them boldly. This is the practice of seeing equality everywhere. You will then transmute all objects in the Atman. Think and feel that all actions are worship of the Atman. Then the idea of inferiority and the idea of menial service will disappear and you will see Narayana everywhere.

44

Unity of Consciousness

There is nothing whatsoever higher than Me, O Dhananjaya! All this is strung on Me, as clusters of gems on a string.

(VII-7)

If you imagine that there is nothing but protoplasm in this universe then all the forms will vanish. All forms are constructed out of one kind of matter only. A tree or a man, a dog, a bug or a mosquito, are made up of the same kind of matter or protoplasm. The protoplasm is a mould of matter in which all life is placed. It is a homogeneous, structureless substance, forming the physical basis of life, endowed with contractility, with a chemical composition allied to that of albumen. The thread of matter that connects all forms is one and the same. You can also imagine that there is nothing but energy or mind in this universe. The student on the path of Jnana Yoga thinks that there is only one thread of pure Consciousness.

Behind the names and forms, there is the universal life or hidden Brahman or immanent God. Try to feel the reality behind the forms. Scorn not at the tiny creatures or the undeveloped beings. The same life that throbs or pulsates in you is also throbbing in ants, dogs, elephants and all creatures. Realise your identity and intimate relationship with all creatures. There is only a difference in the degree of manifestation or expression. All forms belong to God or Saguna Brahman. Look at a tree or a shrub, a dog or a cat, and endeavour to behold the real hidden life or Consciousness behind and under the veil or form. If you practise like this for some time you will derive inexpressible joy. All hatred will cease. You will

eventually develop cosmic love and unity of Consciousness. This will be a very rare and magnanimous experience. It will result in the Vedantic realisation of oneness.

Life is common in trees, ants, birds, animals and human beings. What is common in the sun, moon, stars, chairs, walls, stones, animals, birds and human beings? It is existence. A table exists; a tree exists. Existence is the Sat aspect of the Satchidananda Brahman.

There is only an apparent, fictitious difference in bodies and minds. There are differences in colour and opinion. But the Atman is the same in all. A thief, a prostitute, a scavenger, a king, a rogue, a saint, a dog, a cat and a rat—all these have the same common Atman. Ignore the false appearances and differences. Recognise the Essence or Reality only.

The one Atman appears to be many, just as the one sun appears to be many in various pots of water. Many suns are false. They are merely reflections only. So also, many Jivas are illusory. The one Brahman alone is real.

The divine life that throbs in every atom of the universe dwells also in the hearts of human beings. The soul of an ant is the soul of a man. The soul of a sinner is the soul of a saint. The soul of a beggar is the soul of a mighty king. The ultimate Truth in Nature is the ultimate Reality in man.

Whatever you see is God. Whatever you hear is God. Whatever you taste is God. Whatever you smell is God. Whatever you feel is God. These are the manifest aspects of God. The physical body belongs to Virat. The astral body belongs to Hiranyagarbha. The causal body belongs to Iswara. Where is the little "I" now?

Have an integral cosmic vision. Behold unity in diversity. Break the barriers or dividing walls through discrimination, enquiry and wisdom. Acquire the spiritual vision of oneness or unity. Soar high in the realm of eternal bliss. Happy is he who has realised the

oneness of the Self and who is endowed with the sublime vision of the marvellous Atman.

Realise that the whole human race is one. Break up ruthlessly all illusory barriers that separate man from man. Understand that the fundamental principles underlying all religions are the same.

Feel your oneness with all. Feel your oneness with the sun, the sky, the wind, flowers, trees, birds, animals, stones, rivers and oceans. Realise the oneness of life, the unity of Consciousness. Behold the one homogeneous Self everywhere-in all beings, in all animals, in all plants.

Realise your unity with all. Mix with all. The Parsis, the Americans, the Italians, the Japanese, the Russians all belong to you. You also belong to them. Unite with all.

Realise first your unity with all the members of your family, then with all the members of your community, then with all the members of your district, then with all the members of your state, then with all the members of the whole nation, then with all the people of the whole world. If you succeed in this attempt, then only can you realise your unity or oneness with God.

Feel the Divine Presence in all creation. Learn to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. Behold the Self in all beings, in all objects. Names and forms are illusory. Therefore, sublate them. Feel that there is nothing but the Self. Share what you have—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—with all. Serve the Self in all. Feel, when you serve others, that you are serving your own Self only. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Melt all illusory differences. Remove all barriers that separate man from man. Mix with all. Embrace all. Destroy the sex-idea and the body-idea by constantly thinking of the Self or the sexless and bodiless Atman. Fix the mind on the Self while you work. This is practical Vedanta. This is the essence of the teachings of the Upanishads and the sages of yore. This is real, eternal life in the Atman. Put these teachings into practice in the

daily battle of life. You will then shine as a dynamic Yogi or liberated sage. There is no doubt of this.

You must be a practical Vedantin. Mere theorising and lecturing are only intellectual gymnastics and lingual warfare. They will not suffice. If Vedanta is not practical, no theory is of any value. You must put Vedanta into daily practice in every action of yours. Vedanta teaches oneness or unity of the Self. You must radiate love to one and all. The spirit of Vedanta must be ingrained in your very cells and tissues, veins, nerves and bones. It must become part and parcel of your nature. You must think of unity, speak of unity and act in unity. If you deliver a thrilling lecture on the platform on Vedanta and say, "I am the all; I am the one Self in all; there is nothing but my Self", and then show in action the next moment a different attitude of selfishness and separateness, you will not produce any impression on the minds of the public. You will be called a dry Vedantin only. Nobody will care for you.

Adwaita is a fragrance or sweet aroma that emanates from a Vedantin and is wafted to a long distance. Those who come in contact with a real Vedantin will experience this sweet fragrance. Such a Vedantin need not say, "I am a Vedantin. I practise Vedanta." If you do not experience this delightful Vedantic aroma of oneness or equality in a preacher of Vedanta, know that he is a dry man who prattles something or repeats something like a gramophone. His words will be like empty bullets in the air. They cannot produce any impression on the minds of the hearers.

I reiterate again in order to produce in your mind a deep impression. There is no world. You are not the body, you are the all-pervading Atman. You are the silent witness. The senses perform their functions. There is only the Atman everywhere. Feel the indwelling Intelligence. When you see a fruit, say, "This is the one Atman." See the essence in all forms. Reject the outer sheaths and illusory appearances. This will lead to

beholding all names and forms as the one Atman. There is no necessity of closing the eyes. For this kind of Sadhana, no posture and no closed room are needed. This Sadhana is suitable for the men of the world who are intelligent. This is work combined with Jnana. The Self-delight of the Supreme Brahman appears as the mind and the universe. The world is nothing but the mind. The world is a long dream.

I have given you the essence of Vedanta or Jnana Yoga in a nutshell. Digest it. Absorb it. Assimilate it. Proclaim it boldly everywhere. Become totally fearless. Shine as Brahman. Move about with courage, my dear Jyoti! Rejoice always in the Satchidananda Atman within.

Glossary

Note:

I. This includes only those Indian terms for which the English equivalents are not indicated simultaneously (or almost simultaneously) with their occurrence in the text.

2. The meaning of those compound words as are not included in the glossary may be made out by referring to the separate meanings of their component terms in the glossary.

Adwaita	: non-duality
Agnihotra	: a fire-offering
Apana	: the down-going breath
Apta-Kama	: perfected soul
Ashrama-Bheda	: distinction between the different orders of life
Atma-Jnana	: knowledge of the Self
Avatara	: an incarnation
Bandha	: a Yogic exercise
Bhakti	: devotion
Brahmacharya	: celibacy
Brahmamuhurta	: the early morning hours most conducive to spiritual practice
Brahman	: the Absolute Reality
Deva	: a celestial being
Dharana	: concentration
Dharma	: righteous conduct
Dhyana	: meditation
Dwapara Yuga	: the third of the four Hindu time-cycles

Ekadasi	: the eleventh day of the Hindu lunar fortnight
Granthi	: knot
Himsa	: violence, injury
Jiva	: the individual soul
Jivanmukta	: one who is liberated even while living
Jnana Yoga	: the Yoga of knowledge
Kali Yuga	: the last of the four Hindu time-cycles, the present Iron Age
Kevala-Jnani	: one who is established in the wisdom of pure non-dualism
Kirtan	: singing the Lord's Name
Kriya	: a Hatha Yogic exercise
Kundalini	: the primordial cosmic energy located in the individual
Lila	: divine sport
Mahabhava	: highest pitch or consummation of divine love
Mudra	: a Yogic exercise
Mumukshutwa	: burning desire for liberation
Nadi	: an astral nerve
Nirguna	: without attributes
Nirvikalpa Samadhi	: the highest superconscious state where all mental modifications cease to exist
Nishkama Bhav	: mental attitude wherein there is no desire for the fruit of one's actions
Niyama	: purificatory observances
Para-Vidya	: supreme Science, the Science of the Soul
Prakriti	: Mother Nature

Prana	: the vital force, the life-current
Pranayama	: breath control
Prarabdha	: destiny
Pratyahara	: abstraction of the senses
Raja Yoga	: the Yoga of mind-control, the eight-limbed Yoga of Maharshi Patanjali
Rishi	: a seer
Sadguru	: the true preceptor
Sadhana	: spiritual practice
Samskara	: an impression in the subconscious mind
Sandhya	: the daily worship of offering oblations to the sun-god thrice a day-at sunrise, noon and sunset
Satchidananda	: Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute
Satsang	: company of the holy
Satya Yuga	: the first of the four Hindu time-cycles
Shad Sampat	: the six qualifications prescribed for a student of Vedanta
Shakta	: a follower of the Shakti cult
Smarana	: remembrance
Sushumna	: the chief of the astral tubes in the body running inside the spinal column
Treta Yuga	: the second of the four Hindu time-cycles
Triveni	: a place where three holy rivers meet

Vanaprastha	: the forest-dweller, the third of the four Hindu orders of life
Varnashrama	: the division of castes and stages of life in the Hindu religion
Vedanta	: end of the *Vedas*, the school of thought based primarily on the Vedic *Upanishads*
Yama	: self-restraint; the Lord of Death

The teachings given by Lord Krishna are simply wonderful. He gives instructions on a variety of subjects, but the one ringing note is: "See Me in everything, Surrender yourself to Me. Do all actions for My sake. Cut off all sorts of attachments. Have perfect, unswerving devotion to Me. Sing my glories".

The Lord gives you practical, wholesome guidance. Like a lotus leaf in water you should remain at work. Feel that the Lord's supreme power does everything here. We are all His instruments. Let your hands be ever engaged in the service of the Lord in all. Let your mind be ever thinking of His glories. Let your intellect discriminate correctly. And let your soul be ever in union with the Lord. This is Yoga. A Yogi is not an idle dreamer, an inert stone. Building castles in the air is not the Yoga that Lord Krishna asks us to practise. Beloved aspirants, give up delusion. Plunge in service.

Yoga is not hidden in caves. It is not in thick, sequestered forests. It is not to be found in mountain herbs. God is not a coward to run away from towns, cities and villages. He is all-pervading.

The *Gita* does not want you to flee from your worldly career to the solitude of the forest. It does not bid you hide in a cave of the Himalayas for attaining the supreme peace of the Eternal. It tells you to resist unrighteousness, to develop divine virtues and try to attain Self-realisation in and through the world.

Stick to your duty and to truthfulness. Do selfless service. Surrender yourself to the Lord. Have equal vision and a balanced mind in success and failure, in heat and cold, in honour and dishonour, in pleasure and pain, in happiness and sorrow. Give the mind to the Lord and hands to the service of humanity. Be firmly established in the vow of Brahmacharya. Give up selfishness, meanness, attachment and egoism. You will then be free from the wheel of births and deaths, from the bonds of Karma. You will attain supreme peace, eternal bliss and immortality. This is the message of the *Gita*.

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